



MAJESTIC PHILIPPINES
JOHN MAGEE DISCOVERS
MORE THAN JUST THRESHER
SHARKS IN MALAPASCUA

ONCE IN A LIFETIME
PABLO FUENZALIDA EXTOLS THE
VIRTUES OF BEING THE 2024 OUR
WORLD-UNDERWATER SCHOLAR

SHARK POINT
TALIA GREIS CHECKS OUT
ONE OF SYDNEY'S MOST-
EXCITING SHORE DIVES

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Vanessa Torres Macho

PT Hirschfield chats with photographer, scuba instructor, tech diver and expedition leader **Vanessa Torres Macho** about her expansive expertise and **countless adventures**



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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Know what to look for on your next liveaboard

Liveaboards are a great way to explore some of the world's more-remote dive regions but recently they have been hitting the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Since the Conception fire in 1999, many liveaboards have upped their game and improved safety, education, and response times, however from June 2023 to June 2024 there were six liveaboard fires, two of which resulted in fatalities. Scuba Goat Matt Waters has recently hosted a round table discussion on his podcast with key figures from the dive industry, including liveaboard operators, travel agents, dive professionals, safety experts, and survivors of past incidents. The goal was to pool knowledge and highlight the key safety aspects divers should be aware of. Matt said: "Instead of waiting for regulatory changes, we can empower divers with knowledge.

By bringing together experienced professionals, we can define what should be expected on every vessel - proper safety procedures, essential equipment, the number of qualified personnel on board, how many captains are on duty, night watch and bridge protocols, battery charging locations, emergency exits, evacuation plans, and even how to spot a life raft that's out of service. The list is extensive but sharing this information benefits everyone who steps on board." So, if you are researching your next liveaboard trip, Matt's podcast is definitely worth a listen! **Scubagoat.com**.

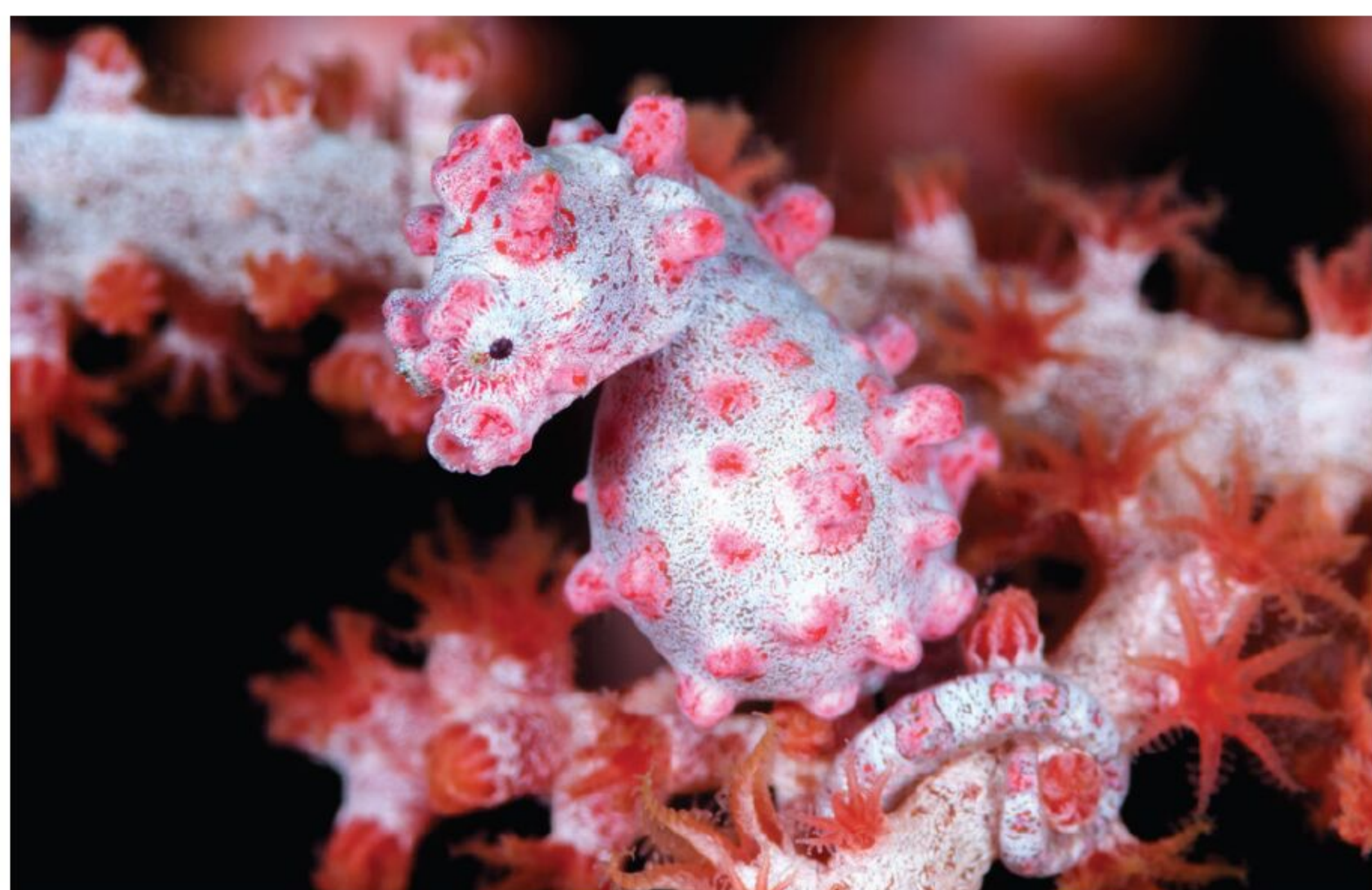
Talia Greis kicks off this month's line-up of great features with a review of the iconic Sydney dive site Shark Point. This site is regarded as one of the best dive sites in the area and boasts coral-covered bommies, grey nurse sharks, giant cuttlefish, seals, and weedy seadragons, plus much more. Nigel Marsh delivers part two of the Gold Coast diving guide. This month, the focus is on the stunning Cook Island and Nine-Mile Reef.

John Magee discovers that Malapascua has a lot more to offer than just thresher sharks and for something completely different, Jayne Jenkins reports back from Sri Lanka, which not only provides plenty of wrecks to explore, but also stunning scenery and incredible animal encounters both above and below the water.

Adrian Stacey, Editor (Australia & New Zealand)



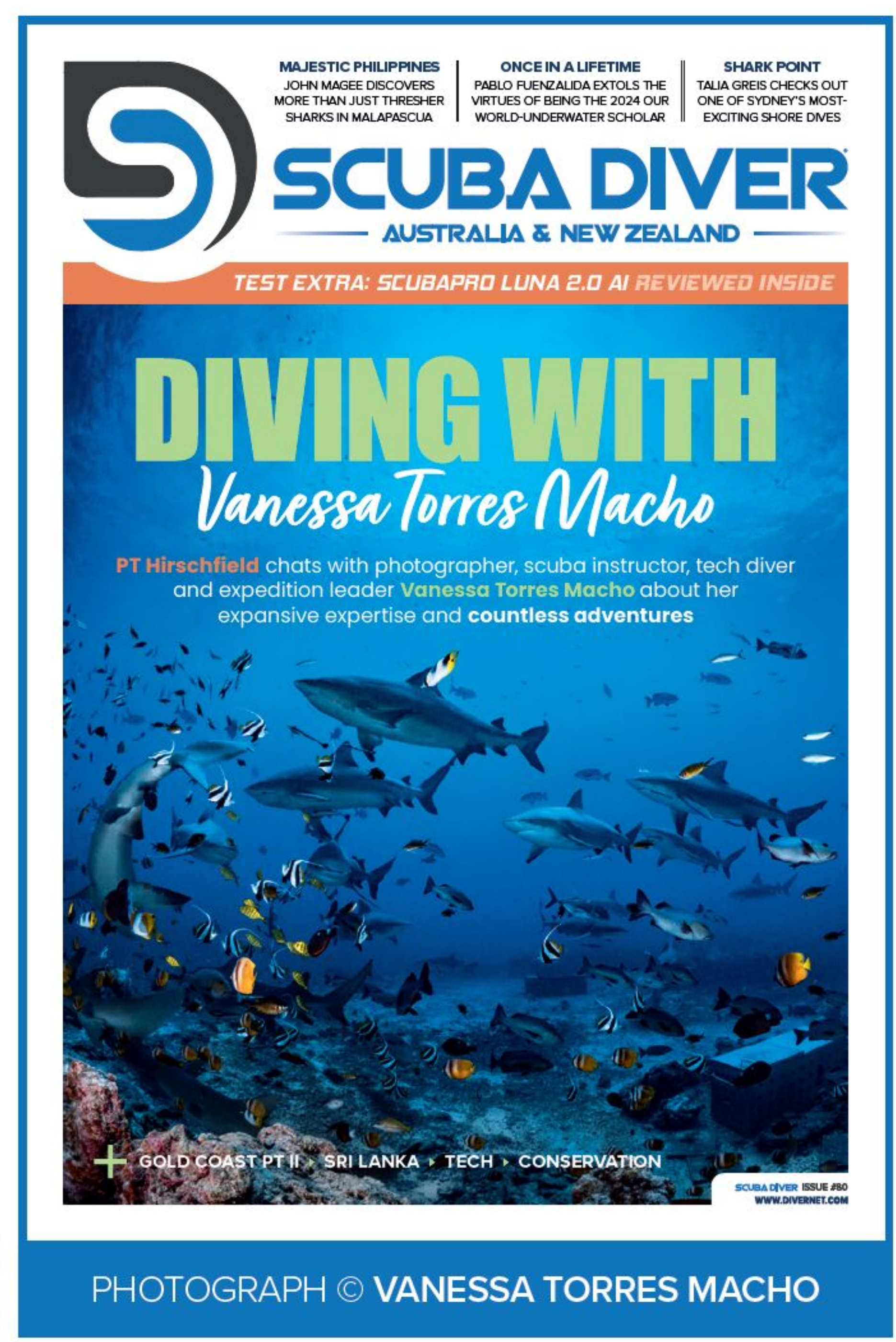
"We are thrilled to be returning in a few months! The reef systems here are the most unspoiled we have seen in our travels around the world and the resort is paradise. We can't wait to see all our friends at Wakatobi." ~ Robert and Barbara Hay



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Each month, we bring together the latest regional industry news, as well as all over our water planet. To find out the most up-to-date news and views, check out the website or follow us on our various social media channels [@divernetuk](https://www.divernet.com/news)
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PADI HANDS SYLVIA EARLE A NEW ROLE

PADI has more than 120 AmbassaDivers who represent the training agency, but its latest appointment has special status – marine biologist, oceanographer and explorer Dr Sylvia Earle has just been named the first PADI Emeritus AmbassaDiver

Now 89, Earle has had a career that embraces more than 100 marine expeditions; nearly 10,000 hours spent under water, including record-breaking dives; more than 200 publications, and lecturing on ocean issues in 80+ countries.

“Dr Earle embodies everything PADI stands for and we celebrate her continued commitment to inspiring future generations of divers and conservationists,” says Kristin Valette Wirth, PADI Worldwide’s chief brand and membership officer.

“For decades, she has continued to break through the glass ceiling and show what is possible when it comes to both seeking adventure and saving the ocean.

“It’s a privilege to amplify her legacy as a scuba diver and ocean advocate.”

The PADI AmbassaDiver scheme is now ten years old, and the scuba divers it has chosen form part of a global team committed to encouraging their communities to experience, explore and protect the underwater world, says the agency.



INDUSTRY NEWS



“I look forward to being a champion for PADI and using this honour to inspire respect, love and care for the ocean while providing effective guidance on safety for those who seek adventure under water,” says Earle, who is regarded as one of the first scientists to have used scuba to document marine life first-hand. She was the first female chief scientist of the USA’s National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and would later lead the five-year Sustainable Seas Expeditions programme with NOAA’s National Marine Sanctuaries.

Earle recorded the deepest seabed walk while leading the first all-female team of aquanauts for the Tektite II project in 1970. In 1985, she made the deepest female solo descent by submersible to 1km, aboard the Deep Rover submersible she had co-designed with her husband, Graham Hawkes.

In 1992, ‘Her Deepness’ founded Deep Ocean Exploration & Research to develop submersibles and other subsea technologies. She remains busy. In 2009, she founded Mission Blue, dedicated to establishing more Marine Protected Areas and designating what she calls ‘Hope Spots’. She also co-hosts the YouTube series Dive in With Liz and Sylvia, with her daughter Liz Taylor and special guests. Accolades include TIME Magazine’s first Hero for the Planet award in 1998, the TED Prize in 2009, UN Champion for the Earth in 2014, and the Ken Burns Prize in 2024.

“Dr Earle’s PADI Emeritus AmbassaDiver distinction is more than a title – it will become a powerful movement that engages the global diving community, honours her legacy and inspires others to rally behind our shared vision to explore and protect the ocean,” says Wirth.

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A circular stage set for a Dan event. The walls are blue with the text "EVERY DIVER SHOULD BE A MEMBER" in white. In the center is a red and white scuba flag with a white cross and the word "DAN" in red. Two black armchairs are positioned on a blue circular rug, each with a white desk lamp. A small camera on a tripod is in the center of the rug.

DAN will release new episodes every two weeks. For more information about The DANcast, including the latest episodes and links to subscribe to the podcast on Spotify and YouTube, visit DAN.org/Podcast

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MICHELLE COVE, ANNE HASSON AND ROSEMARY LUNN – SCUBA DIVING HALL OF FAME 2025 INDUCTEES



The 2025 inductees – Michelle Cove, Anne Hasson and Rosemary Lunn – to the prestigious International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame (ISDHF) are unique as it is the first time that all members being inducted are women.

Established by the Cayman Islands Ministry of Tourism in 2000, the ISDHF celebrates dive industry leaders who have contributed to the success of recreational scuba diving worldwide through innovation and advancements.

The 2025 inductees will be formally inducted into the hall of fame at a ceremony in the Cayman Islands on 20 September 2025.

Michelle Cove (The Bahamas)

Michelle Cove was instrumental in developing Stuart Cove's Dive Bahamas into one of the Caribbean's largest dive operations. She secured and grew watersports and diving concessions for major partners like Atlantis Resort, Baha Mar, Carnival Cruise Lines, and private clubs. Under her leadership, the company developed a diverse range of offerings, including SCUBA, SNUBA, SEA TREK, SUB (Submersible Underwater Bubble), snorkelling, watersports, and underwater photography and video, making world-class ocean experiences accessible to visitors worldwide.

A skilled shark dive leader, Michelle is a lifelong shark safety, education, and marine conservation advocate. Her collaboration with the PEW Environmental Group and Bahamas National Trust led to the creation of the Bahamas Shark Sanctuary in 2011, the first of its kind in the Atlantic.

Michelle's expertise extends to the film and television industry, where she has trained numerous television and movie personalities to dive and served as a safety diver, on-camera talent, and stunt performer.

Anne Hasson (United States of America)

Anne Hasson's pioneering efforts revolutionized the liveaboard scuba diving industry having launched the renowned Cayman Aggressor in 1984. As Vice President of Aggressor Adventures, Anne oversees the Reservations,

Marketing and Advertising departments, maintaining the integrity and image of the 41-year-old company's brand and corporate identity. Today, Aggressor Adventures sets new standards for dive and adventure tourism worldwide.

Under her leadership, Aggressor Adventures has expanded to include 24 international liveaboard dive yachts, signature lodges, bird watching and river cruises, operating in premier locations such as the Bahamas, Belize, the Cayman Islands, Galapagos, Egypt, the Maldives, and beyond.

A passionate advocate for sustainable diving, Anne promotes eco-friendly travel practices to protect marine ecosystems at all Aggressor locations. She is also instrumental in establishing high customer service standards, solidifying Aggressor Adventures as a worldwide leader in the tourism industry.

Rosemary Lunn (United Kingdom)

Bringing decades of expertise to her diverse contributions, Rosemary Lunn has played a pivotal role in shaping the diving industry, and is a valued professional, prolific journalist, speaker, educator, event organiser, and an advocate for dive safety and education.

An accomplished diving instructor, Rosemary holds certifications as a PADI IDC Staff Instructor, BSAC Advanced Instructor, and a Trimix and CCR diver, with extensive teaching experience in the UK and internationally.

Her influence extends beyond recreational and technical diving – she is the first non-military civilian and first female diver to join the UK Ministry of Defence as part of the Defence Diving Standards Team.

An innovator in technical diving, Rosemary was a co-founder of advanced and technical diving symposium EUROTEK, established TEK Dive USA, and co-ordinated Rebreather Forum 3 on behalf of AAUS, DAN, and PADI.

Her outstanding contributions have earned her recognition, including the SSI Platinum Diver Award, and she is an Associate Member of the Women Divers Hall of Fame.

11 NEW MARINE SANCTUARY AREAS ANNOUNCED FOR AUSTRALIA'S STRESSED SOUTHEASTERN WATERS

The final southeast Marine Park Network Management Plan, which federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek tabled in parliament recently, includes 11 needed new marine sanctuary areas for Australia's stressed southeastern waters, the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) said.

The southeast marine region covers the oceans beyond state coastal waters, from 5.5km offshore to the edge of Australia's exclusive economic zone 370km offshore. The southeast stretches from the NSW far south coast, through Bass Strait to Kangaroo Island, and around Tasmania. It also includes the Macquarie Island Marine Park, halfway between Tasmania and Antarctica, which was added to the network in 2013. The management plan is the product of a statutory review that occurs every ten years. AMCS Protected Areas Manager Adele Pedder said: "This is good news for marine life in Australia's Southeast marine region, but there's still work to be done."

"The final plans include 11 new marine sanctuary areas that will upgrade 80,821 sq km of existing marine parks into marine sanctuaries. This includes nearly doubling marine sanctuary protection for high conservation continental shelf habitat. "The plan also finalises an expansion to the sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island Marine Park, which was tripled in size to an area larger than Germany in 2023. "This final plan comes after two rounds of public and stakeholder consultations which, combined, included more than 32,000 submissions to the Australian Government in support of increased protections for Southeast marine life."

"Southeast Australia's waters contain some of the richest, most diverse life on our planet. Three great oceans – the Pacific, Indian and Southern oceans – combine to create an upwelling of deep, nutrient-rich water that turbocharges marine life in the region. "Sadly, the Southeast is also a global hotspot for warming oceans and is the most intensely exploited region of Australia's oceans."

"These new protections will help safeguard seamounts, little penguins, endangered pygmy blue whale habitats, ancient black corals, deep-sea sharks, underwater canyons as deep as America's Grand Canyon, important habitat for the endangered shy albatross, southern bluefin tuna, aggregations of Port Jackson sharks, and the fragile ecosystems of the Great Southern Reef such as golden kelp forests."

"All new oil and gas, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and seismic blasting titles will be banned from every marine park in the region. Most Australians are appalled to hear that marine parks can still allow destructive activities such as seismic blasting, drilling for fossil fuels and industrial fishing."

"Unfortunately, the final plan also confirms that nearly 11,000 sq km of a marine sanctuary will be downgraded to allow access for commercial tuna longlining in the Flinders Marine Park. With our oceans' health in serious decline, we need to be expanding marine sanctuaries, not rolling them back."

"The federal government has also missed the opportunity to better protect other biodiverse and productive habitats. Apollo, East Gippsland and Boags Marine Parks still have no marine sanctuaries."



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YOUNG WOMEN LEADING THE WAY IN FIJI WATERSPORTS AND MARINE



Fiji, with its crystal-clear waters, and stunning world-class coral reefs, has long been a haven for scuba diving enthusiasts seeking unparalleled biodiversity. What is exciting today is the growing number of young women from the islands who are breaking barriers and leading the charge in the scuba and watersports community. These rising stars are not just pushing the limits of their sport but also inspiring future generations of girls and young women to dive in. make a splash, and take on the ocean.

The team at Volivoli Beach Resort, one of Fiji's most-experienced and qualified dive resorts, is dedicated to nurturing young Fijian women and showing that the sea is not just for the boys. Athletes like Asivina (Intern), Suliana (Divemaster), Zara (Master Diver), Adi (Intern) and Kelera (Divemaster) are making waves on the international scene, proving that women in Fiji are just as skilled and daring in the water as anywhere else in the world.

These young women are changing gender norms in Fiji and encouraging more girls to pick up a set of fins and a mask and start their journey into the underwater world. Along with 19 of their colleagues, these five young women recently also completed their Restricted Master Engineer Class 6 (RME6) Captains courses as part of a joint venture between Volivoli Beach Resort, Ra Divers Fiji, and Marine Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF).

In addition to their physical prowess, these women are using their platforms to advocate for environmental conservation. As stewards of the ocean, they are at the forefront of promoting sustainable practices and raising awareness about the importance of protecting Fiji's delicate marine ecosystems. Fiji's future in watersports looks bright, thanks to the rising influence of these trailblazing young women. As more girls take inspiration from their successes, we can expect to see an even greater surge of female dive professionals under the waves, the ocean is theirs to conquer, and they are doing it with strength, skill, and style.



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Shark Point is undoubtedly one of the best shore dives in the greater Sydney region. Located in Clovelly's backyard, this stellar underwater playground is a multi-faceted labyrinth of overhangs, swim-throughs, and coral-covered bommies, where absolutely everything is larger than life.

Schooling fish that blanket out the sun, grey nurse sharks, giant cuttlefish, seals, weedy seadragons, and if you're lucky enough, humpback whales. These are only but a handful of close encounters you can expect from taking a splash at Shark Point. But as they say, fortune favours the bold, and truer words could not be said about this challenging, exhilarating, adventurous site.

Entry and exit

The entry and exit is perhaps the sole drawback for many divers to attempt the site as a shore dive, as it can be physically challenging, adrenaline pumping, and incredibly treacherous if something unexpected arise.

Entry - The entry can be done through Clovelly pool, however, you won't be able to reach the epicentre of the site with much time to spare before having to turn back. So most people decide to enter at the Gutter, which is at the edge of the rocks, and at the precipice of open ocean. With twins, a 15kg camera, and a drysuit, the trek over rocks to the edge of the ocean is long and exhausting, and must be taken with care so as to avoid a twisted ankle, broken gear, or worst (all of which I've had the pleasure of experiencing).

Once you've braved the rocky red carpet, rock climbed down a few ledges, and made it to the gutter, you'll want to take a breather and make your final gear checks. Air, mask, fins, dive computer, camera lens cap off, camera vacuum green - or you'll have a daunting surface swim back to base.

Now comes the fun part! You'll need to watch the swell roll in and negotiate a sweet spot to quickly put your fins on and giant stride into the gutter. I find it's crucial to make this assessment from the park before taking the journey, so that you're familiar with the periods, and the potential possibility of rogue waves rolling on in. But there's always a lull between sets, and this is when you'll want to giddy up and get in the water. My friend has always said that 'Shark Point is a cruel mistress' and will knock you on your backside if she's not treated with caution and respect.

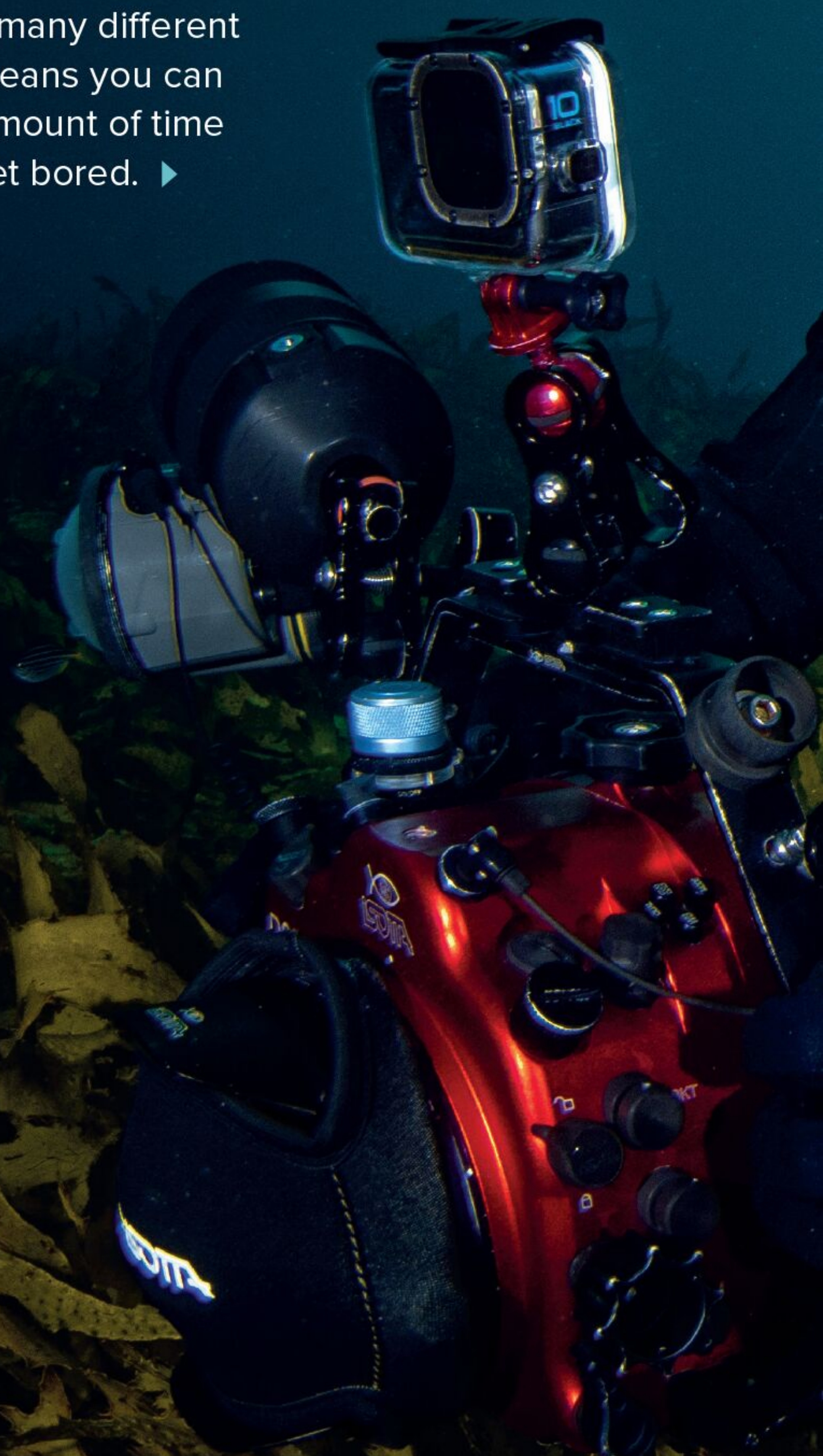
As soon as you land in the water, you'll need to kick away from the entry with sincere urgency, to avoid being sucked back into its wishy-washy gutter. Once this happens, it can be hard to break the cycle of surging in and out of its territory. Once you've kicked about 20 metres east (out into open ocean), you're ready to begin your descent, and long journey north. But the hard part isn't necessarily over.

Exit - Prior to your dive, I find it's incredibly important to take note exactly when you'll be encountering the highs and lows of the tidal charts, or you can find yourself in a bit of a sticky situation. Ideally you want to be jumping in at the middle of incoming tide, so that when you reach the exit, there's more than enough water flowing into Clovelly Pool. What most people don't know, is there is a huge underwater wave breaker that separates open ocean with Clovelly Pool. What this essentially means is at low tide, and with a bit of swell, you may find yourself practically sucked back with the building of a wave, and smashed onto the shallow wave breaker with humungous force. And if you're someone like me who would always put my camera's safety first, you're likely to be walking away with one too many bruises.

So you see, from start to finish, this site is not for the faint of heart, and should only be done with seasoned regulars who can assist you with the finer points of achieving the site without incident.

Ins and outs of the site

Shark Point offers up many different dive profiles, which means you can spend a substantial amount of time diving it, and never get bored. ►



SHARK POINT

Talia Greis
checks out one
of the most-
exciting shore
dives in the
greater Sydney
region –
Shark Point

Photographs by
Talia Greis

Did you know?

Shark Point is located on the north side of Clovelly Bay in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, only 8km from the city. Clovelly is also home to two other very well known dive sites... Gordons Bay (also known as Thompsons Bay) and Clovelly Pool.

© Vanessa Torres Macho

Profile One

This is perhaps the most-popular profile to knock out, as you're guaranteed all the great encounters with Shark Point's local marine life. After jumping the gutter, the idea is to head north, and maintain a depth of about 15m. Exploring the site's ins and outs is essential to optimize your experience, with several hidden swim-throughs peppered along your journey. There's also an impressive amount of overhangs and crevices buried into the sites walls, where you'll have fun hunting for the smaller locals including eastern blue devils, upside down pipefish, catfish, nudibranchs, and cuttlefish.

However, the ultimate goal of this profile is to find the signature landmark known as Big Rock or Roundabout Rock, and you'll know you're coming close (or found it) when the density of pomfrets, old wives, and yellowtail fish becomes overwhelmingly thickened. For some reason, marine activity really kicks up a notch or two in this general vicinity, so many divers decide to spend a great portion of gas consumption circling Big Rock as the final destination.

With the perfect light and visibility, this is perhaps the best opportunity for underwater photographers to capture some very dramatic wide-angle scenes. Wobbegongs and huge smooth rays often cruise by the landmark, as well as giant cuttlefish and the odd cheeky seal usually found hunting for fish in the shallower parts of the region.

During the whale migration (which usually runs from May to November), you'll be on the lookout for humpback whales in the blue. Their songs can fill your dive with a haunting, sombre tune that vibrates through your entire body. Make sure you're constantly looking out and up, as your chances of having one cruise by increase substantially. This is the only shore dive in Sydney, I've had my own lucky encounter, and would have had the gentle giant cruise straight over me, unnoticed, if my buddy hadn't drawn my attention to it.

Cuttlefish



Crocodilefish eye



Wobbegong



“ Despite having dived Shark Point over 100 times, I can still say with certainty that navigation is a reasonably challenging task to perfect, as relying on compass direction alone won't get you into the pool every time ”



The topography is also intriguing

Did you know?

Shark Point is an excellent dive site, however it is not for the novice diver. Diving here is best done with experienced divers who have done numerous dives here and have a good understanding of the site. Shark Point is also an excellent night dive!

This profile averages out at approximately 8m-10m, and you're bound to have memorable encounters with smooth rays, eagle rays, schooling fish, blue grouper, and much more.

Profile Two

This profile is an adventurous, exploratory dive that absolutely requires nitrox, as you'll spend a great portion of the time at the 18m-24m mark. As you jump in, head due east before you hit the third terrace that hugs the sandline, and head north. This deeper profile doesn't offer the same high density of marine life, but the encounters present a completely different experience.

Here you'll have the pleasure of surrounding yourself with hundreds of boulders that are peppered with soft coral tulips. This stunning underwater garden is the ideal setting for macro exploration, as the deeper regions are absolutely teeming with small critter life. I've had the privilege of finding rare nudibranch species, pygmy pipehorses, crocodilefish, weedy seadragons, and eels.

If you're diving between late-August and mid-November, you'll also find huge aggregations of Port Jackson sharks resting on the sandline. This time of year is the peak of their breeding season, and you're likely to find hundreds gathered together in one condensed area. Sometimes I feel like being at this depth, in the middle of open ocean, staring off into the endless sandline can give you that sense that you're in the path of something bigger, so keep peering off into the distance.

Profile Three

I call this profile the 'the express lane', as it's for those of you who are after a quick and easy splash. If you only have a 12-litre tank handy, or don't have more than an hour to spare, you can simply jump into the gutter and head south. This essentially cuts out the more-excitable regions of the site, but gives you a little taste of paradise in the latter half of the full profile. You'll still have incredible opportunities to enjoy the shallow kelp gardens and dramatic underwater landscapes, with the added bonus of natural light illuminating the path back into the pool.

Things to know

Safety checks - As mentioned, Shark Point is a taxing experience, and once you jump in there's really no turning back (without a long surface swim back through the pool. The entry and exit are approximately half a kilometre apart, so if something is forgotten or goes wrong, you're in serious trouble. Before your stride into the gutter, be sure to do a final buddy check, make sure all underwater photography gear has been prepped and checked the night before, and everyone is feeling good and healthy before proceeding to the edge.

Essential gear

First and foremost, I'd strongly advise against diving with anything less than a 15-litre tank. You're putting in the hard yards to make this dive possible, so you want to maximise your experience for all the effort. I know the thought of trekking with twin tanks over the rocks is practically heartbreaking, but I truly believe it's the only way to dive Shark Point. This way you could either maximise your time doing one of the profiles, or even fit two into a single dive.

Nitrox is a key component for this particular site, especially when exploring the deeper profiles, which sit at around 20m-26m. ▶



Fish shoals can be extremely dense

And whatever you do, ensure you've taken your dive computer (fully charged) and SMB with you. Surfacing in open ocean with a substantial amount of boat traffic can be incredibly dangerous without one.

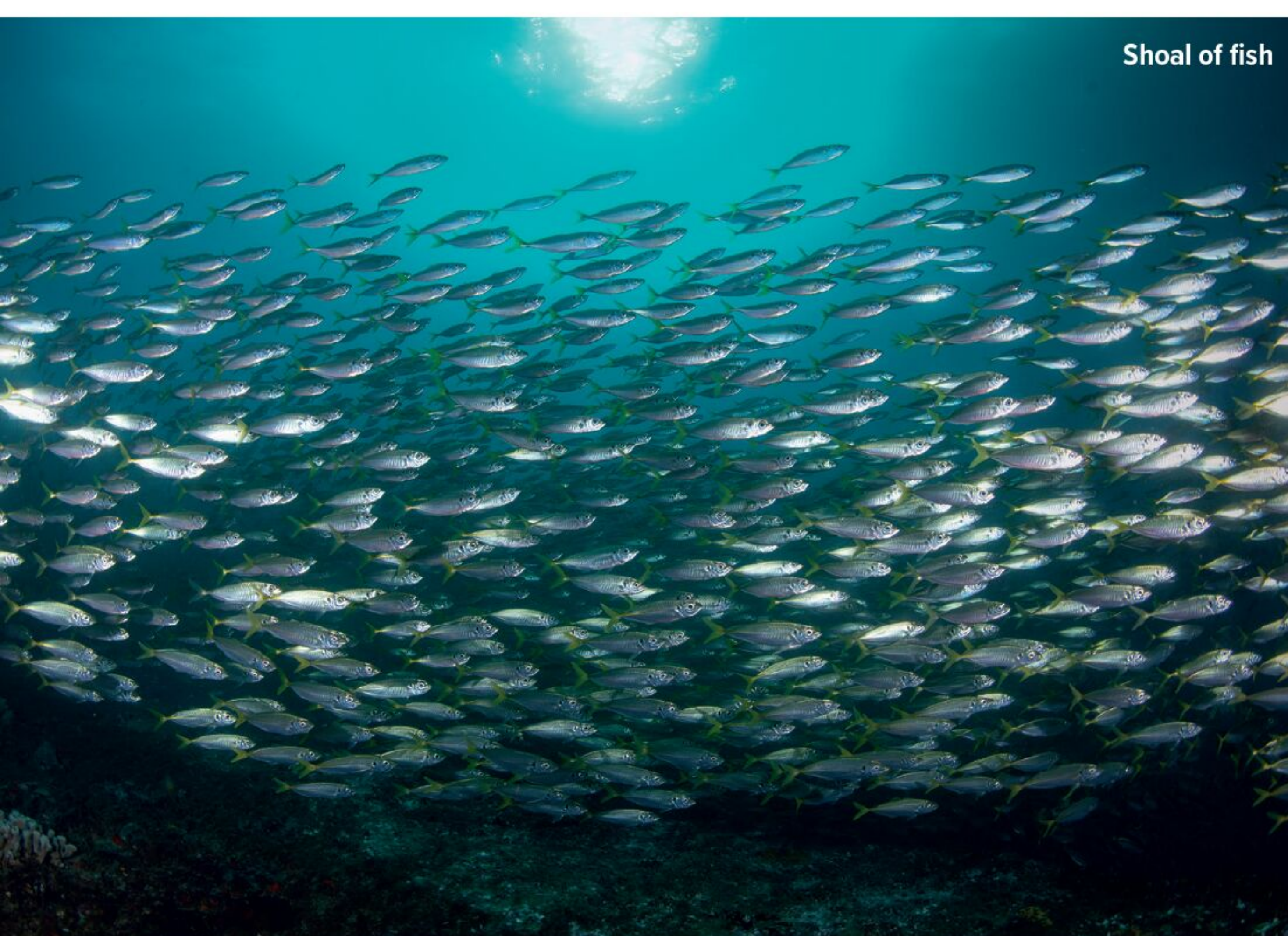
Know when to say no

We are all too familiar with botched swell reports and unpredictable conditions, so when you get to the site, be sure to walk to the edge of the top cliffs and inspect the entry for a solid five to ten minutes. Look for rogue waves, and assess the swell period. Also be sure to triple check the exit, and be mindful of tidal times to avoid unexpected shifts in future conditions.

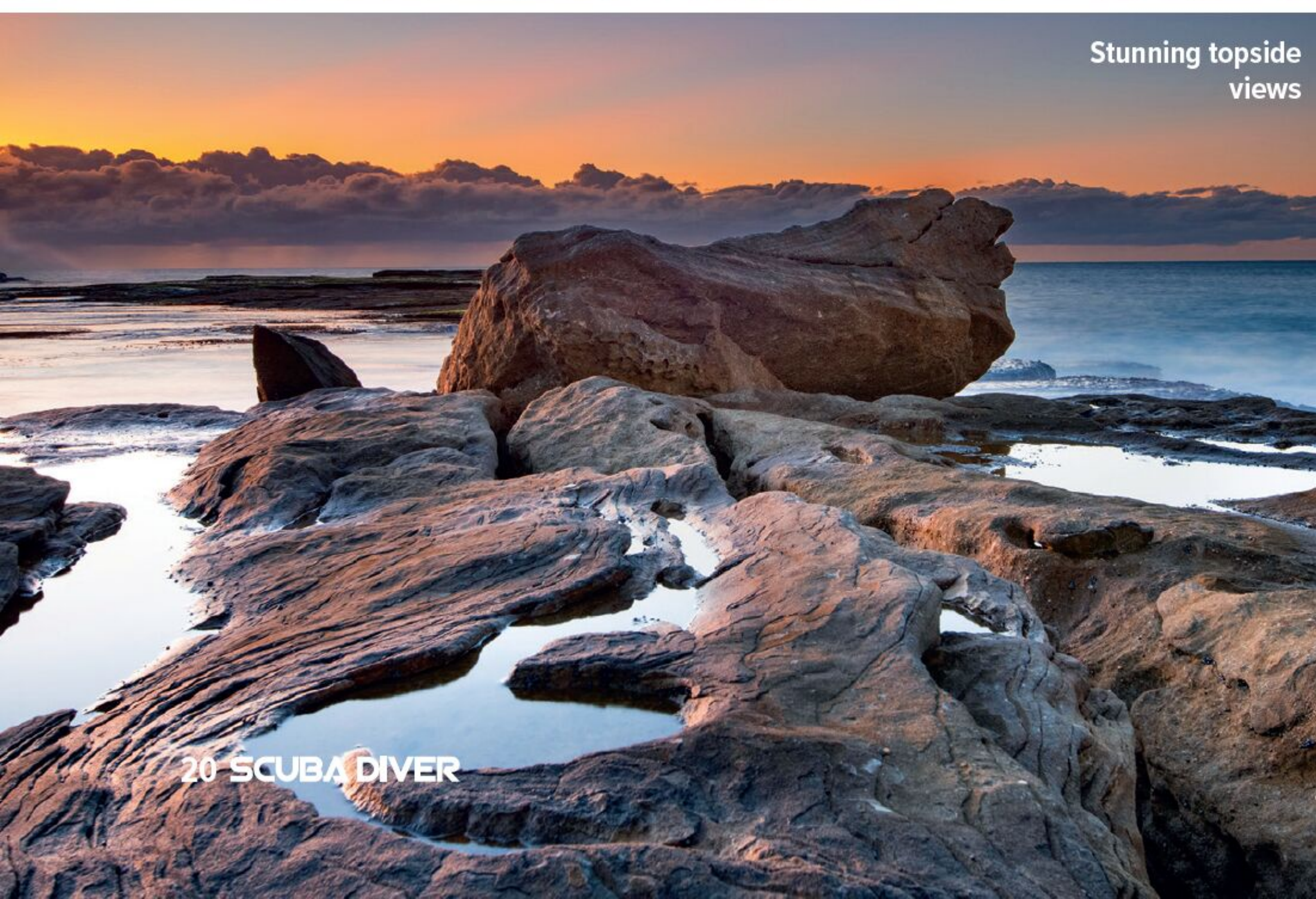
Sydney is also prone to the occasional ground swell, so be mindful of the fact that rocks shift every so often, which can make the walk to the entry impossible at times. Never dive without a buddy, as you may find them an invaluable tool even before you've taken a splash.

And seeing as we are on the topic of buddies, if you're not familiar with the site, be sure you're diving with someone who is. Despite having dived Shark Point over 100 times, I can still say with certainty that navigation is a reasonably challenging task to perfect, as relying on compass direction alone won't get you into the pool every time. Every time you dive here, take note of landmarks that stand out, and check your compass at these landmarks for future reference.

We all know the feeling of getting up at the crack of dawn, and venturing down to your chosen dive site, only to realise it's far too rough to even attempt. It's a heartbreaking, sobering snap back into reality that will leave you in tears. But it's an important skill to have which could inevitably save



Shoal of fish



Stunning topside views



Swim-through



Eastern blue devil fish

your life. Shark Point should not be dived with a swell report greater than 1.2 metres (1.5 metres if you're experienced and confident of your abilities to execute a save entry). And ideally you want the swell direction coming from the S, SE, with a N, NE wind direction to counteract the rolling swell. If you've arrived to a N, NE swell, you may want proceed with caution.

Best time to dive

Like all dive sites and marine life encounters in Sydney, the best time to dive Shark Point would have to be in winter, as the conditions and visibility tend to improve around this time of year. It's the type of site you'll want to take in from a wider perspective; with the underwater topography, large schooling fish, and marine rock stars making an appearance on a regular basis. Perhaps the best thing about diving in winter is the higher chance of encounters with humpback whales, and giant cuttlefish. So if you can brace the colder climates, check in the blue.

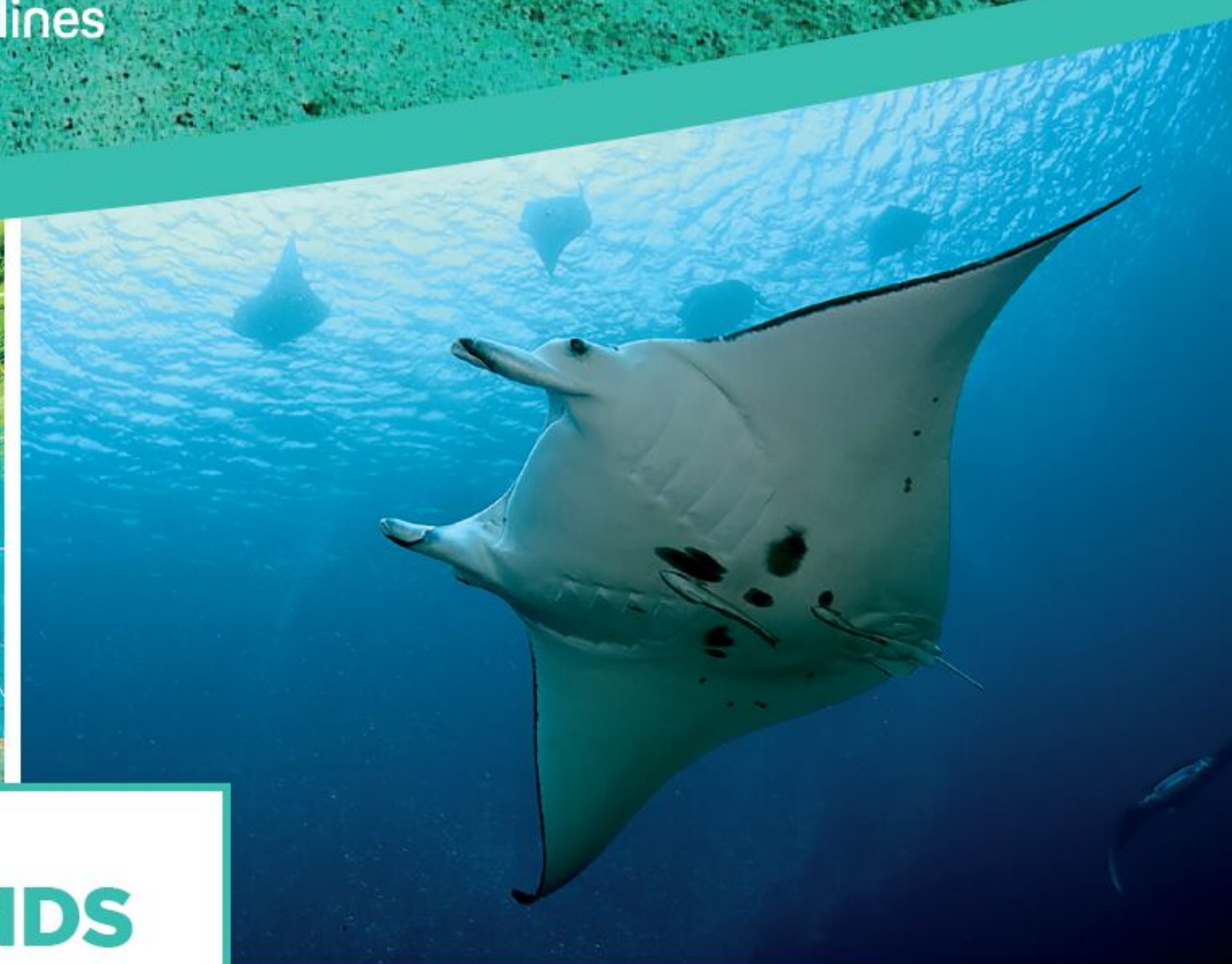
Conclusion

Shark Point as a site is larger than life, and the ultimate dive destination for adventure-seeking locals to spice things up. You'll always find different ways to explore the site, and discover new and exciting areas in the process. Once upon a time, my buddies and I decided to dive profile one, and keep going till we hit Bronte Beach, just to see what was beyond the boulders!

The crucial thing to remember, no matter how you dive it, is safety. The ocean's power can really be felt at the edge of the cliffs, so make sure you know how to tackle the entry and exit, and be sure you're either familiar with the site yourself, or diving with someone who is. Embrace the adventure, channel the inner explorer within, and always remember to keep looking up! ■



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John Magee heads to Malapascua in the Philippines, a destination renowned for thresher shark encounters, but which offers so much more for visiting divers

Photographs by John Magee

Did you know?

You can go diving in Malapascua all year long. The best months for underwater visibility are January-April. Dive conditions are generally good year round with the exception of November and December, when visibility is very lower.

The other side of MALAPASCUA

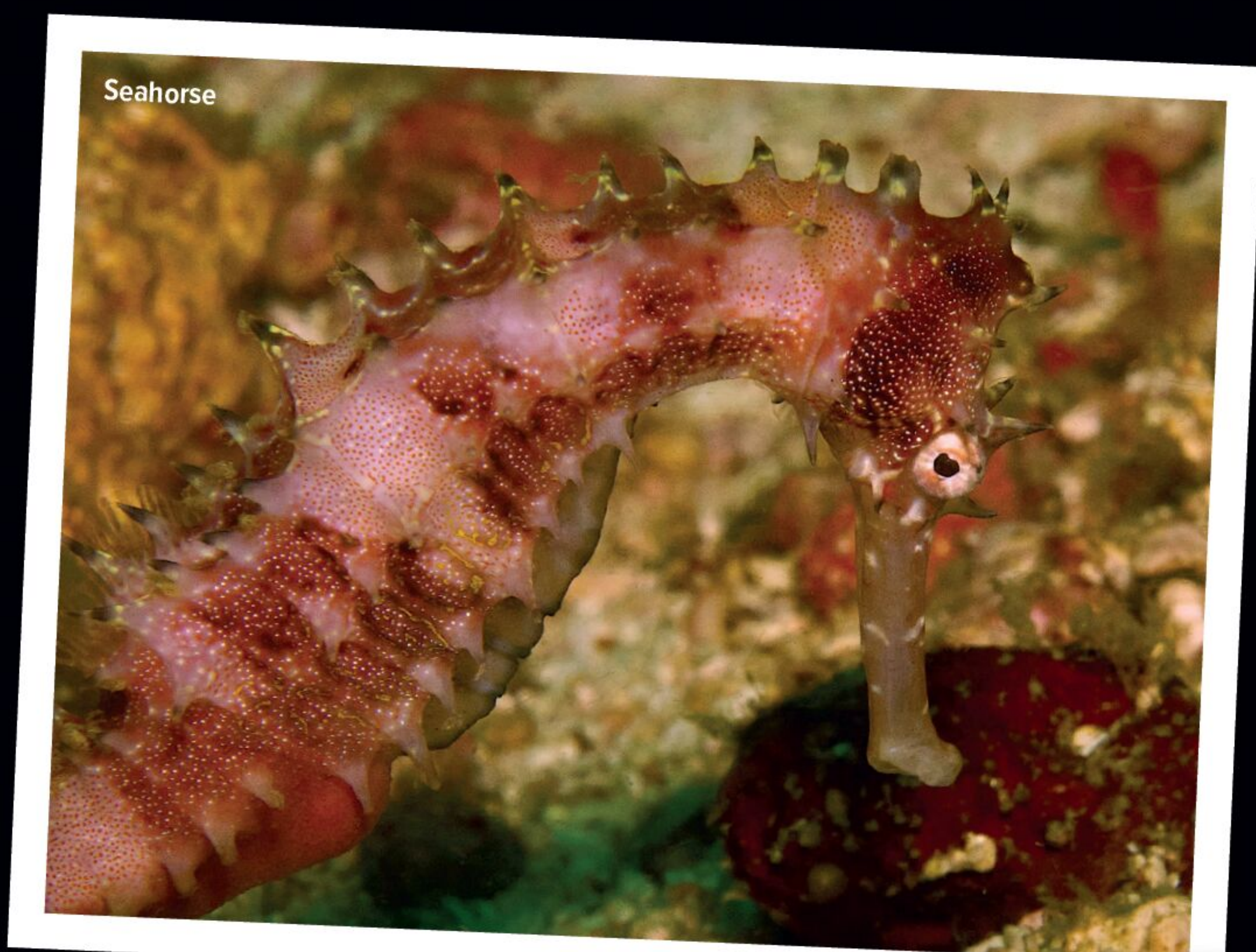
There are many places around the world for a scuba diving holiday. The Philippines is one that often comes to mind with its breathtaking marine diversity as well as the beauty on land. That biodiversity stems from the fact that the Philippines is in the Coral Triangle, the birthplace of coral and the centre of marine biodiversity.

After flying into Cebu, a three-and-a-half hour road trip and a ferry to the island, you arrive at the sunny, sandy, and sleepy island of Malapascua. With the water temperature averaging 28 to 32 degrees C, this toasty paradise is one of the few places on the planet where you can see world-class shark life along side world-class macro.

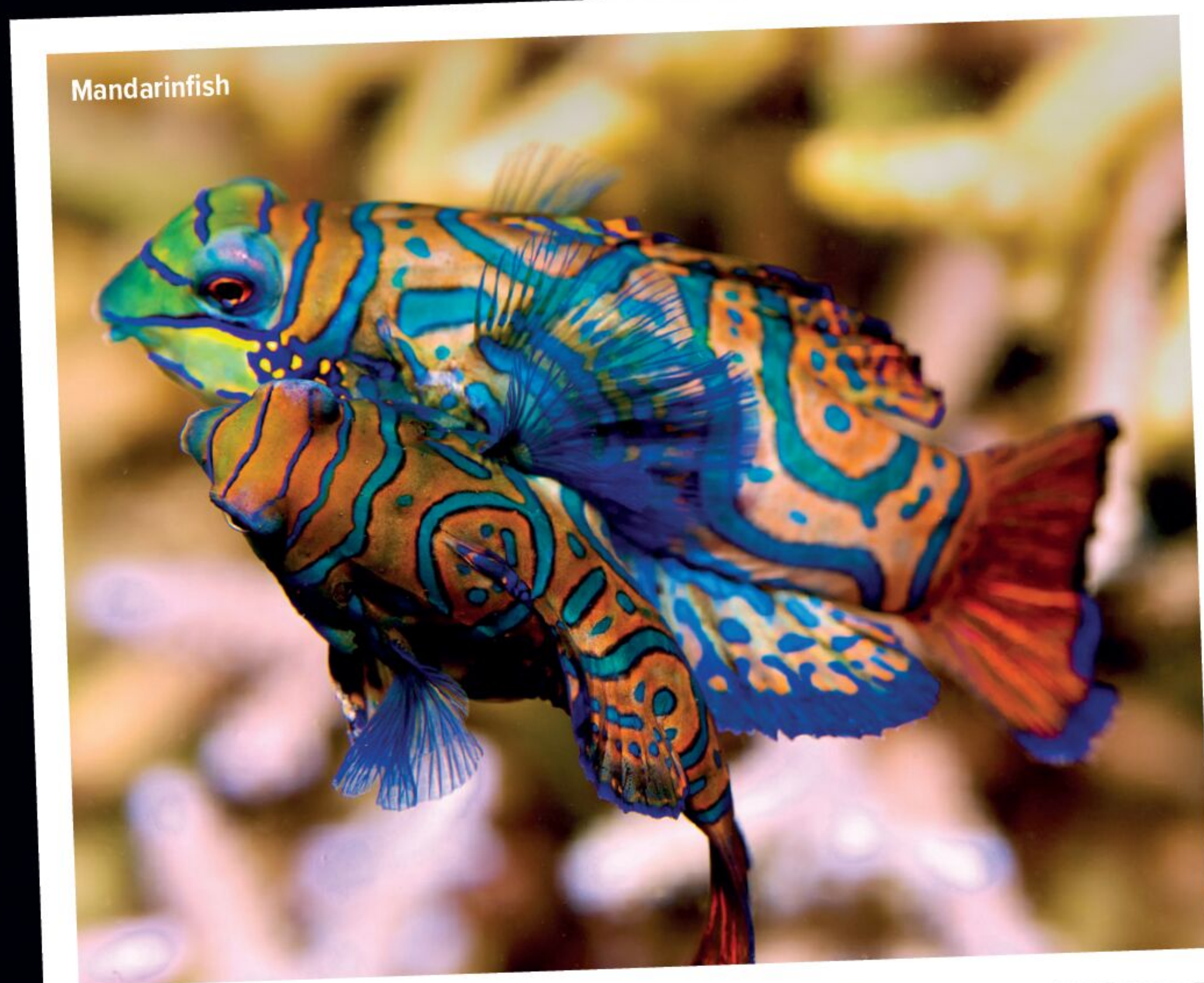
I first visited in 2014 and since then, have been back five times. It's almost like visiting old friends but with the advantage of never knowing if you're going to see something brand new as well. There are many dive centres here and for me, three stand out: Sea Explorers, Thresher Sharks and Evolution Divers. Evolution is my go to, they have great service, good dive gear with nitrox available, small groups with even one-on-one available and best of all, they have the best eyes and can spot the smallest of creatures from metres away.

The first thing to do on arrival is to head to bed! This might sound counter productive but with 4am starts to get to Kimud Shoal first, you need to make friends with your bed. With the early starts however, it does mean that you are first to the threshers and get to watch not only the sun rise but the sharks come up from the deep to the cleaning stations for the day.

Watching their behaviour during the dives, there seems to be an understanding between the sharks as there can be up to six different sharks all waiting to be cleaned and yet there never seem to be any arguments. ▶



Seahorse



Mandarinfish

“ With the early starts however, it does mean that you are first to the threshers and get to watch not only the sun rise but the sharks come up from the deep to the cleaning stations for the day ”



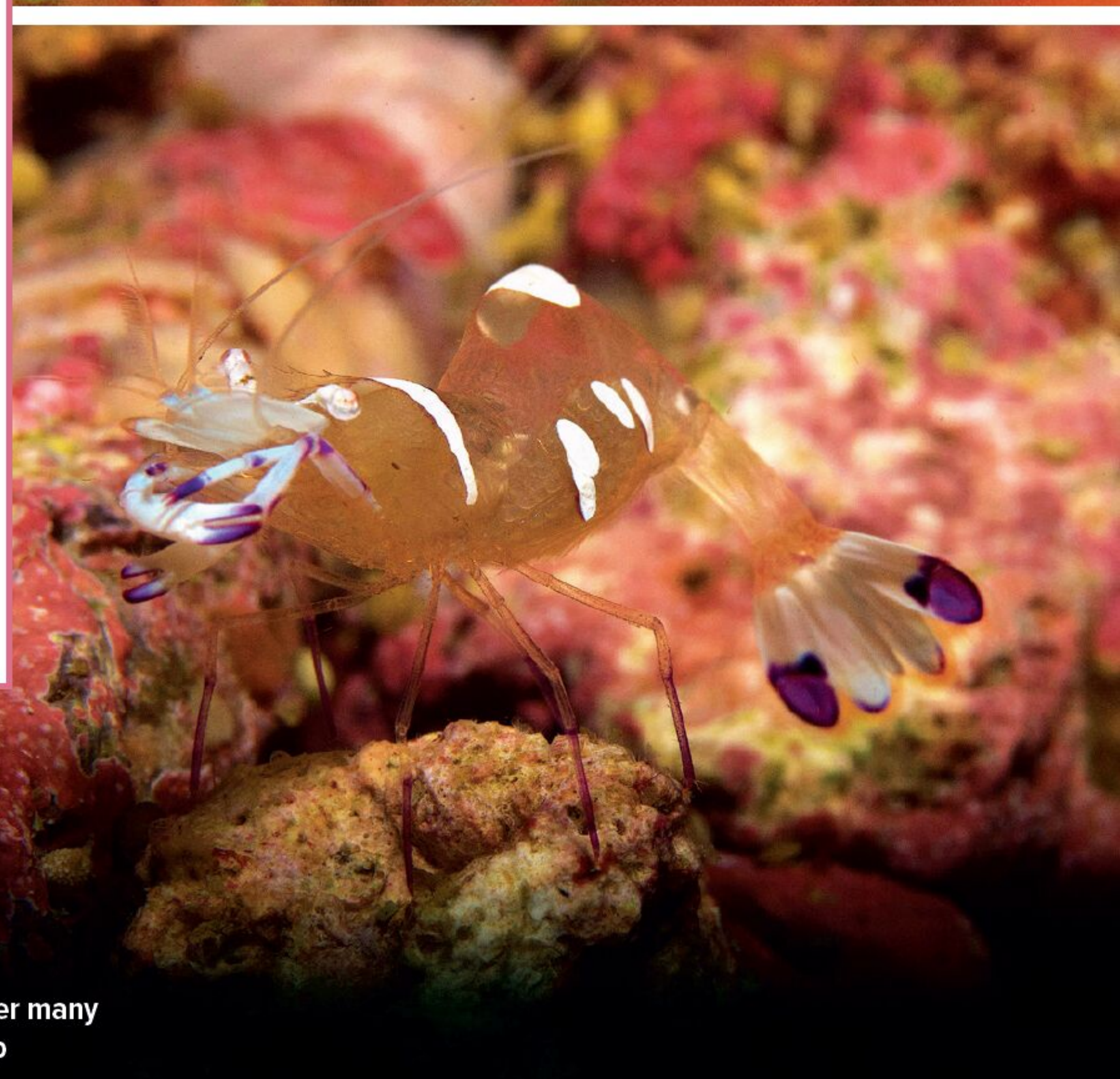
Macro life abounds



Pipefish



Porcupinefish



You will encounter many species of shrimp

Your first dive of the day can be a long one as you sit at 12-14m for up to 80 minutes but there is plenty to look at during this time. The main thing to take into consideration on these dives as a photographer is that no lights or strobes can be used at all to make sure the sharks are comfortable. This just means that you might need to adjust your way of shooting to make the most of the subjects with these restrictions. One dive that stood out for me during my 12 days here was the second from last dive with the threshers. Towards the end of the dive, the threshers suddenly disappeared. The guide and me looked at each other and two minutes later, two huge tiger sharks, each around four metres long, swam straight past us in just 4m of water. You just never know what you might see here.

One of the major reasons I came back to Malapascua was for the macro life. There are around 20 different macro sites here with everything you could want with a macro lens. One of the best to start with is Evolution Diver's house reef at night. Head in to 5m-6m of water to a small area of coral and wait as the sun sets. As the world is heading to bed, the mandarinfish come out to play and it's not long before the male starts doing his thing and tries to get the female to come out of the coral for a sunset dance. Using a light scares the mandarinfish away so its red light only with



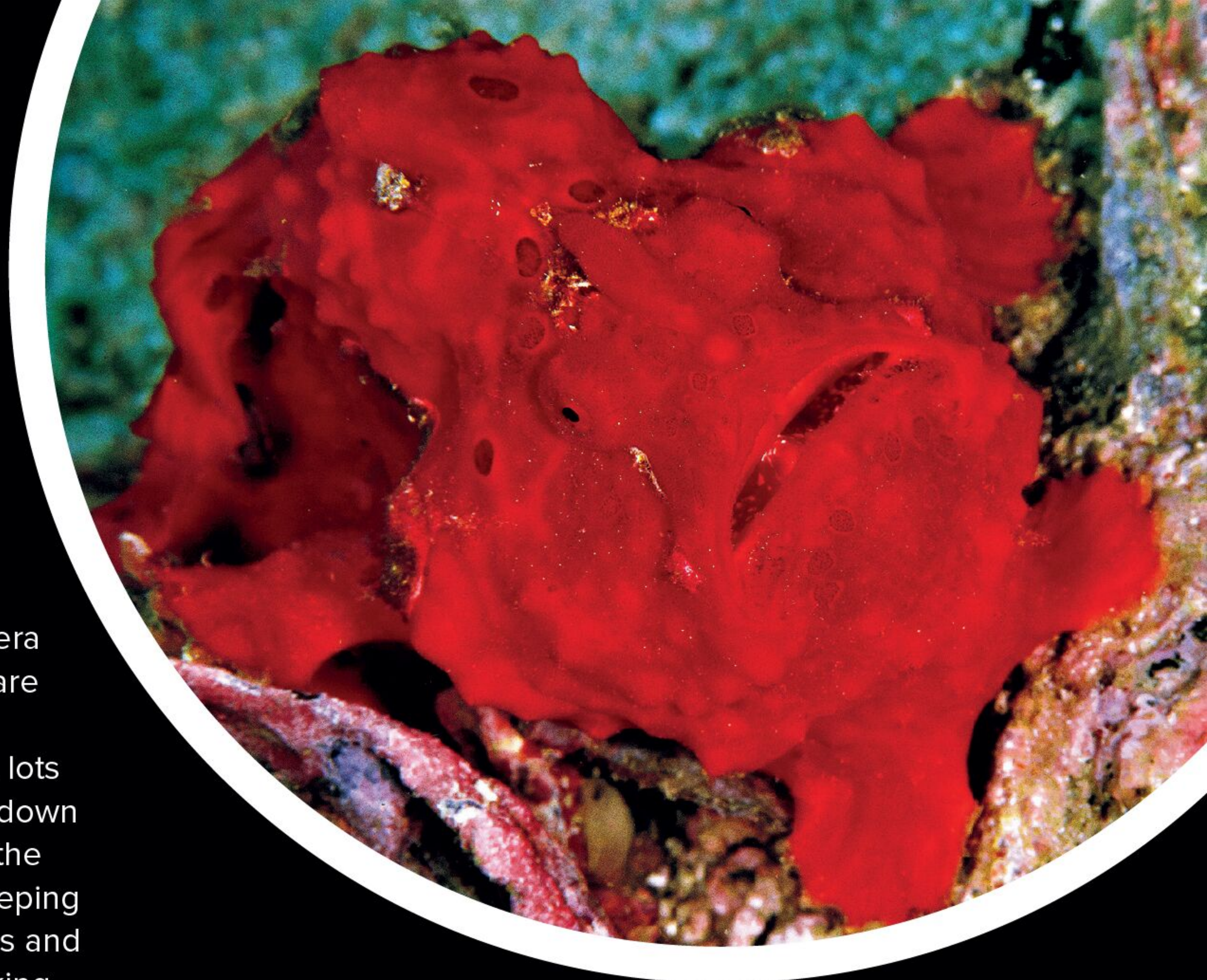
Flamboyant cuttlefish

the strobe and you may need some real patience to get the right picture. It's not easy but it's worth it to capture the dancing. Some of the other dive sites around Malapascua are well worth diving and have some great macro life and beautiful pink soft corals everywhere.

Lapus Lapus is a dive site about a 15-minute boat trip from Evolution. This has no mooring so you will jump in and drop down, you dive around a sloping pinnacle that drops down 10m-22m. Usual highlights are nudis, frogfish, cuttlefish, shrimps and other macro life, there is a lot here so keep your camera on standby! On the way back after 60 minutes there are always strong currents, so stick together.

Giliano is a beautiful reef to the north of the island, lots of corals both hard and soft around 10m and it drops down to 23m to a sandy rubble bottom – and this is where the magic is. Here you may encounter seahorses and sleeping sea urchins moving around, zebra crabs, some Nemos and lots of sea moths and three beautiful red frogfish looking for dinner and nudis everywhere. You can do another 60-70 minutes here, just watch your air. And there is a mooring line back to the boat.

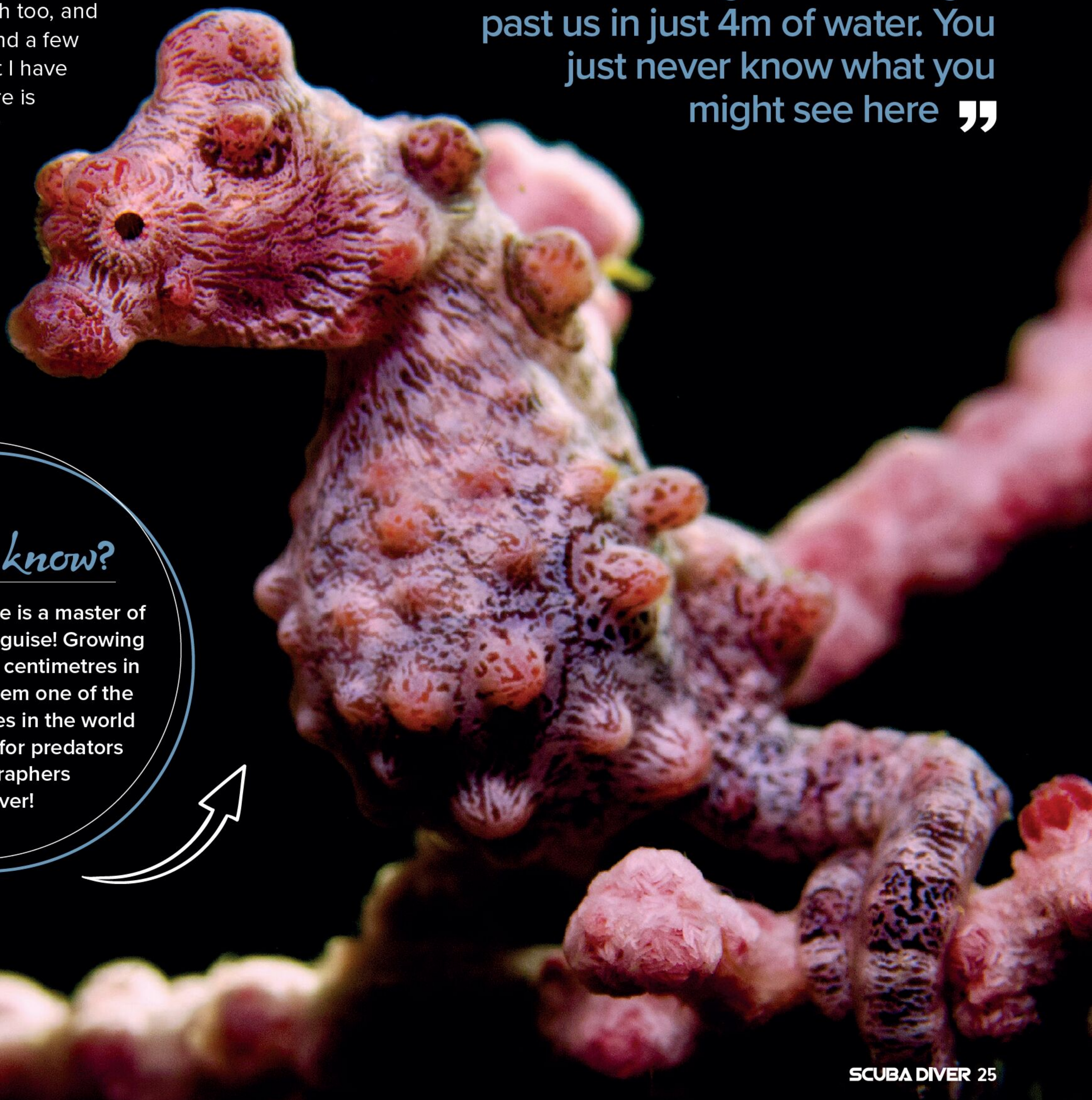
Deep Slope also nearby is the other great dive site on the other side of this bommie and drops away to 23m with more life here to a sandy bottom and the place to find ghost pipefish black and white, and also red robust ghost pipefish too, and a few mantis shrimps, and a few coloured flat worms that I have never seen before. There is lots to see so keep your eyes open. Starting back to the boat the corals live up to their name, lots of soft corals of all colours - yellow, red, pinks and blues. ▶



“ The guide and me looked at each other and two minutes later, two huge tiger sharks, each around four metres long, swam straight past us in just 4m of water. You just never know what you might see here ”

Did you know?

The pygmy seahorse is a master of camouflage and disguise! Growing no bigger than two centimetres in length, it makes them one of the smallest vertebrates in the world and thus difficult for predators and photographers to discover!





Nudibranch City
certainly delivers

One of the day trips offered is to Gato Island where you can do two very different dives in the same day. The first is a cavernous area with candy crabs, pygmy seahorses, ghost pipefish and sleepy whitetip reef sharks. There are also rocky outcrops covered in beautiful soft corals hiding the smaller critters and even octopus. This really is a photographer's wonderland.

The second dive Gato Island offers is Nudibranch City. As the name suggests, in one dive, I counted 18 different species of nudibranch including many I have never seen before. What a place!

My final highlight was Chocolate Island, and not just because of the name. The reef here is in amazing condition with corals I have never come across before, not even in books. The amount of life here and how it behaves could easily trick you into thinking you are the first person to ever visit this reef. The marine life did not seem afraid of us clumsy divers, stopping to investigate us as much as we wanted to investigate them. In just one dive here, I managed to take well over 100 pictures. It really did live up to its name, providing the sweetest reef and marine life that you can't help but love and want to take home with you.

So for both the big and the little in just one place, Malapascua has something for divers on every level. The reef changes throughout the year, but the best time is anytime between March and September. I'm sure I'll be back, maybe I'll see you too? ■

“ With the early starts however, it does mean that you are first to the threshers and get to watch not only the sun rise but the sharks come up from the deep ”

Did you know?

Within the thresher shark family there are three recognized species: the common thresher, the bigeye thresher and the pelagic thresher. While each species shares the same iconic long tail, they have slight variations in size and habitat.



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Sublime SRI LANKA

Jayne Jenkins heads to the island of Sri Lanka to experience the diving off the east coast, as well as dip into the rich cultural heritage and tradition on land

Photographs by Jayne Jenkins

Nestled in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is a stunning island destination known for its rich cultural heritage, lush landscapes and golden beaches. Whether you're seeking an adventure-filled experience, a relaxing beach getaway or a dive into history and tradition, Sri Lanka offers something for every kind of traveller.

Although Sri Lanka is known for its tropical beaches and lush landscapes, it is also a great place for scuba divers to explore. With warm waters, rich marine life, and a great range of dive sites, it's an ideal destination for both beginners and experienced divers. Whether wanting to explore vibrant coral reefs, encounter shipwrecks or swim with whales, turtles and teeming fish, Sri Lanka has something for every diver (and snorkeller).

Diving is available all year around, but the two major seasons dictate which side of the island you can dive. These are the West Coast Season (November-April) and East Coast Season (May-October).

Both coasts offer very different types of diving, and we were there to visit during the east coast season. We were lucky enough to spend three and a half days diving the wrecks and reefs around Trincomalee and Pasicuda.

Sri Lankan Airlines has direct flights from Sydney and Melbourne and one stop flights from Perth arriving in Colombo on the same day. As the next day we were driving across to the east coast to dive, we stayed overnight in Colombo to be refreshed for the six-hour drive. The drive was in a comfortable, private air-conditioned bus and we

had a few interesting stops along the way for refreshments and landmark viewing. You really believe you have landed in Sri Lanka when you see elephants roaming freely and monkeys leaping around along the roadsides. It was a great pit stop for us to photograph the playful little primates.

One thing that became evident on the trip across the land was the friendliness of the local Sri Lankan people and on reaching our destination, we were greeted with so much warmth and enthusiasm you forget you have been on a bus all day. Waking to a beautiful Trincomalee sunrise the



“ Koneswaram Temple adds a special significance to the Swami Rock dive site, as many of the underwater relics, including statues and stone pieces, are believed to have originated from the temple complex ”

WKA

Did you know?

Sri Lanka has an abundance of great sites to discover, including wrecks scattered off the coast. Many of the wrecks are covered in marine life, soft corals, macro critters and large aggregations of schooling fish.

next morning and an amazing Sri Lankan breakfast, we were ready to head out diving.

The dive shop is a short drive from most hotels where dive briefings and gear checks were done. As this was a beach launch, we had a quick stroll down to the beach to join our dive boat. All the talk about the beautiful white sandy beaches in Sri Lanka, we were standing on one – blue water, white sand and sunshine.

Our first dive was a short boat ride along the coast to a dive site called Swami Rock. Our land mark for the dive site was the Koneswaram Hindu temple, a historical and cultural landmark of the region. The historical and cultural importance of Koneswaram Temple adds a special significance to the Swami Rock dive site, as many of the underwater relics, including statues and stone pieces, are believed to have originated from the temple complex. ►



Swami Rock dive varies from 5m-24m with a sandy bottom and small pinnacles. Lots of rays, anemones, morays and pufferfish and seeing the underwater statues believed to be from the temple complex that was destroyed in the 17th century.

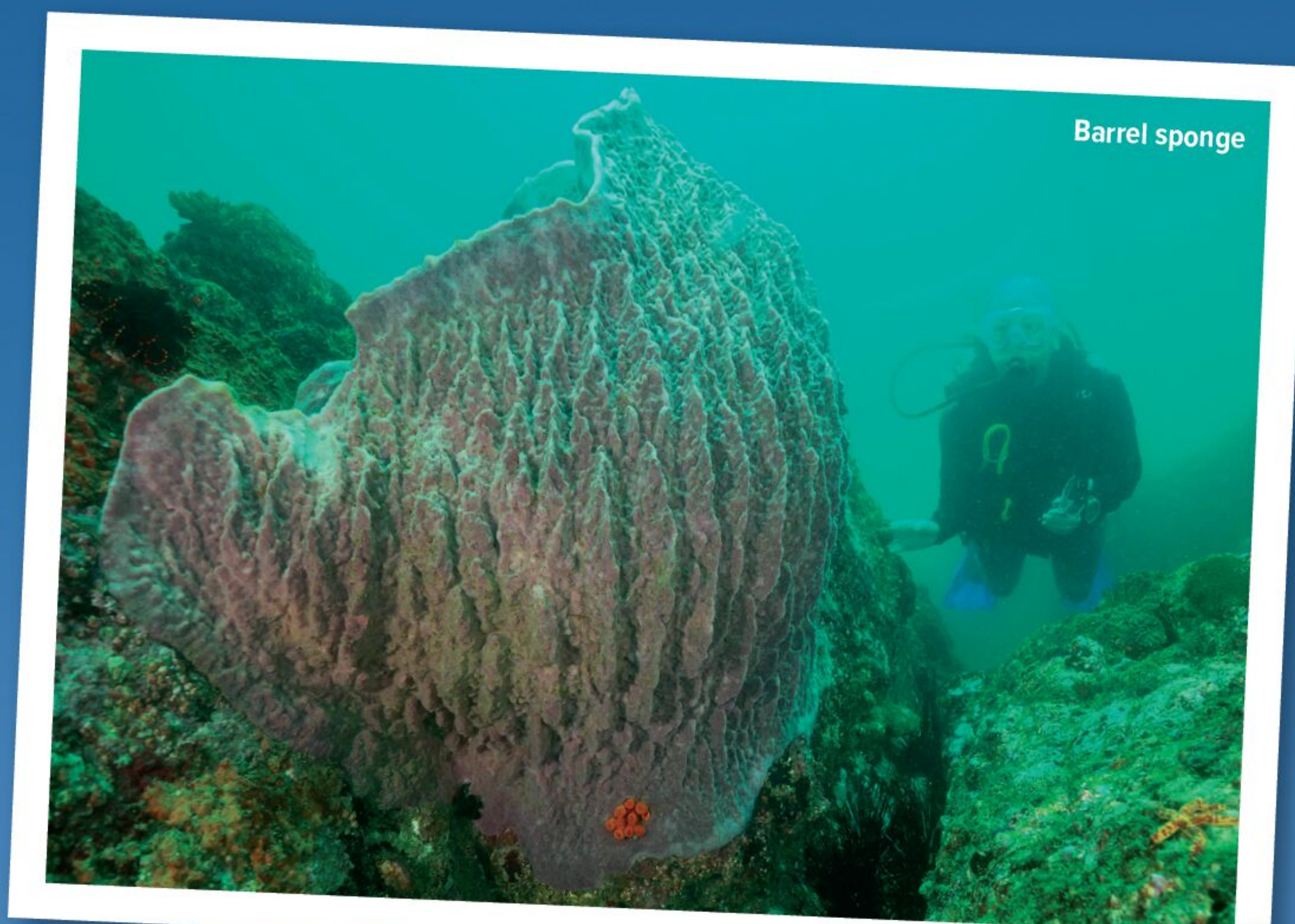
Our next dive took us to an area called The Underwater Museum. This dive site was established by the Sri Lanka Navy in 2020 off Sandy Bay. Apart from the history of the site, this was probably one of the most unique dive sites I have dived. A sandy bottom in about 18m, this vast area was like a step back into history. The underwater displays include sculptures made from eco-friendly materials, reflecting Sri Lanka's rich history and culture. Over time, these structures have fostered coral growth, enhancing the site's ecological value. In among the statues are two gunboats the Jagatha and Veera, which have become great artificial reefs hosting plenty of marine life. Big bull rays were cruising the sand, so many lionfish, moray eels and plenty of schooling fish on the wrecks.

We felt we had not had enough time to experience this whole site so opted to stay there for our next dive. This dive site is a photographers' dream and a great place for an introduction into wreck diving.

A few of us did the afternoon dive at Coral Cove which was a very relaxing reef dive with swim-throughs, bommies and plenty of marine life. I do not think I have ever seen so many moray eels on one dive, plus lots of lionfish and pufferfish with some huge barrel sponges.

The next day was a drive down the coast to Pasicuda, which is famous for the British Sergeant wreck. The SS British Sergeant was a British tanker built in 1922 by Palmer's Ship Building & Iron Co Ltd. During World War Two, on 9 April 1942, the vessel was attacked and sunk by Japanese aircraft during the Indian Ocean raid. The wreck, now split into two main sections, lays in 24m on a sandy bottom.

On arriving at the wreck, the swarms of bait fish and fusiliers almost block out you have arrived. They are like



Barrel sponge



Giant puffer being cleaned

starling murmurations swooping in, over and below, hiding the entries and among them large snapper. The wreck is accessible for penetration due to the huge openings at the split. A huge black coral tree was my marker for the anchor line and once inside there are large areas and plenty of openings, plus lots of schooling fish life. Seeing the superstructure and swimming through the wreck was

“ From here we moved onto Minneriya National Park for a four-wheel drive to see ‘The Gathering of the Elephants’ and bird watching ”



Topside scenery is equally stunning



The superstructure
looms out of
the green



The wrecks are
covered in growth



Ruined temple



Bollards on the
wreck




Sri Lankan
elephants

fantastic. Not only do you have the wreck, but the marine life is also amazing. Plenty of pufferfish, lionfish, grouper, angelfish, moray eels and even nudibranchs for the macro lovers. Inside the wreck there were also very pretty tiger anemones. We opted to do our second dive here to appreciate such a beautiful site. It is too large a wreck for one dive, and the second dive was just as good.

Our last dive was off the Kayankerni Reef, where the SS Lady McCullam lies, a British passenger and cargo ship built in 1908. In 1926, while enroute from Kalkudah to Trincomalee, she struck a reef and sank. The wreck now rests at a depth of about 13m-15m and has become a favourite dive site especially for new divers. The wreck is scattered along the sandy bottom with anchors, passageways to swim through, boiler and plenty of fish life. It was a perfect way to end our diving on the east coast.

We were also lucky enough to have Rasika Muthucumarana, the Maritime Archaeologist / Research Officer, working for the Maritime Archaeology Unit of Sri Lanka, give us an engaging talk on the wrecks and their history of Sri Lanka. There are so many there to be explored, with roughly 100 or so throughout the coastline.

Apart from the diving, the unique land experiences in Sri Lanka are not to be missed. En route back to Colombo we visited Polonnaruwa, an ancient city complex. ►



Diver exploring the wreckage of the SS Lady McCallum

Did you know?

The SS Lady McCallum sank in 1926 after striking a reef off Poolair Point, 10 miles north of Kalkudah.

Polonnaruwa took its place in history after King Vijayabahu I defeated the invading Cholas and moved the capital from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa. It is renowned for its well-preserved 12th-century ruins and impressive stone culture. Exploring Polonnaruwa, which is today a UNESCO World Heritage site, you can see Brahmanic monuments built by the Cholas and the monumental ruins of the fabulous garden city created by Parakramabahu I in the 12th century.

From here we moved onto Minneriya National Park for a four-wheel drive to see 'The Gathering of the Elephants' and bird watching. From May-October each year mid-afternoon, around 150-200 individual elephants come out of the forest into the open to graze on the fresh green pasture by the water's edge at Minneriya and Kaudulla National Parks.

We were up close and personal and able to observe the social dynamics of the Asian elephant as the large bulls in musth compete among each other and seek the females within the herd, while young calves get up to their mischievous antics often to the displeasure of their alert mothers within the herd.


This was such a great way to finish our brief adventure and experience some of Sri Lanka's best. 'The Gathering of the Elephants' is ranked among the world's top wildlife viewing spectacles runs.

The west coast of Sri Lanka is also a hidden gem for divers, offering diverse dive sites with beautiful coral gardens, shipwrecks, and abundant marine life. The best time for diving on this coast is from November to April, when the waters are calm, and visibility is at its best. Diving on the west coast of Sri Lanka offers a perfect blend of adventure, history, and vibrant marine life, making it a must-visit destination for underwater enthusiasts. ■

The author visited Sri Lanka as a guest of Classic Destinations, Sri Lankan Airlines, Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts, Thema Collection and Tamarind Tree Garden Resort.

How to book a trip to Sri Lanka

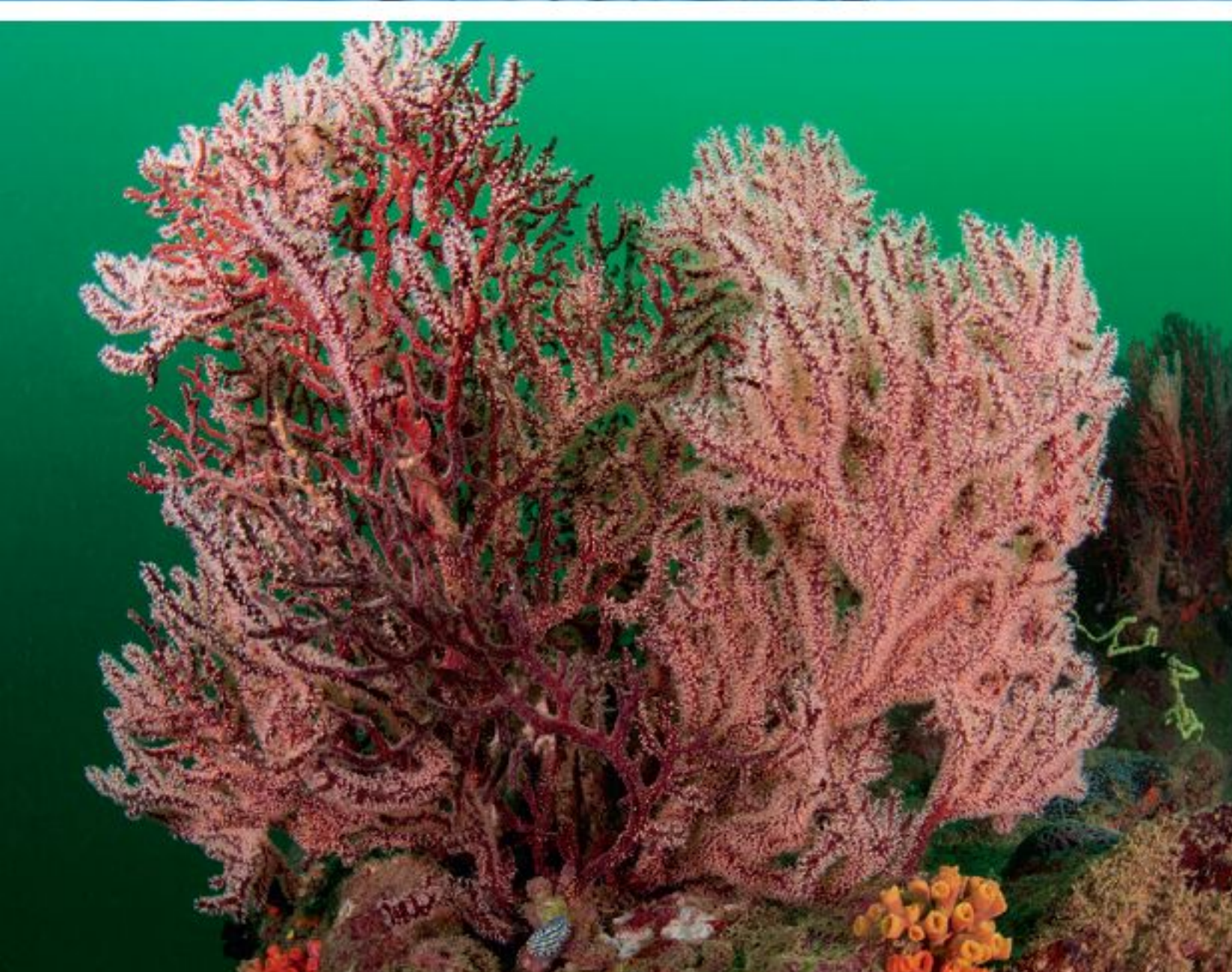
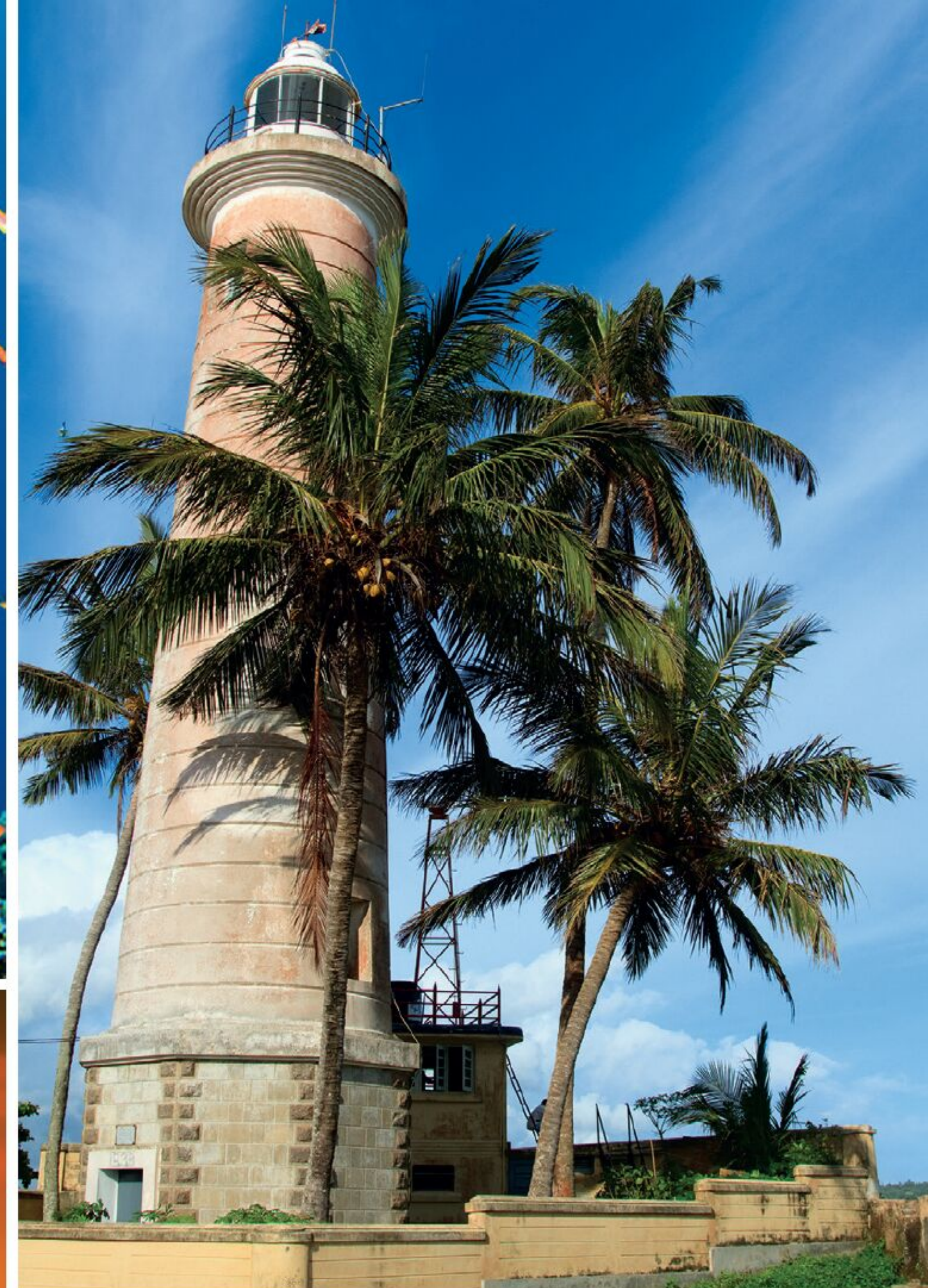
Diveplanit Travel has partnered with Classic Destinations to curate a selection of Sri Lanka dive safari itineraries which can be found at diveplanit.com/srilanka. Contact the team of experts at Diveplanit for more information.



Large anchor



Shoals of fish surround the wrecks



Discover Sri Lanka

Your dream destination

Sri Lanka is a dream destination for divers seeking vibrant marine biodiversity, WWII wrecks, exciting wildlife and rich cultural history. With fringing coral reefs, deep drop-offs, and a mix of beginner-friendly and advanced dive sites, the country offers something for every level of diver, from beginner to tech.

Diveplanit Travel has partnered with Classic Destinations to curate a selection of dive tours on the east and west coast that combine diving, cultural tours and wildlife safaris.

Visit diveplanit.com/srilanka for more information.



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THE TRAVEL EXPERT

Each month dive travel expert Deborah Dickson-Smith of Diveplanit Travel offers hints, tips and advice to help you plan your next trip!

HOW TO PLAN A DIVE TRIP TO SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka is a diverse diving destination, one that suits all sorts of divers, from those wanting easy diving on pretty coral reefs, to technical divers with a lust for rust seeking to explore the depths of one of the world's most-famous World War Two wrecks - HMS Hermes.

Topside, there's exciting wildlife - elephants, leopards, monkeys, and wild peacocks. Being a relatively small country, it's easy to combine diving with a wildlife safari - and then there's Sri Lanka's rich cultural history, with dozens of ancient temples and monuments, reflecting hundreds of years.

There are two ways to dive Sri Lanka. You can flop and drop at a resort, or book a tour so that you can dive in a couple of locations, and add on a wildlife safari and cultural tour. Note that most dive operators operate separately from resorts/hotels - there are very few 'dive resorts'.

Best time to dive in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a year-round diving destination thanks to its two distinct monsoon seasons, which affect opposite coasts at different times.

West and South Coasts (Colombo, Hikkaduwa, Unawatuna, Mirissa, Kalpitiya)

- **Season:** November to April
- **Best time:** March and April.
- **Why?** Calm seas, excellent visibility (15-30m). Early-March to April are the peak months in the movement of Whales.
- **Highlights:** Wreck diving in Colombo, vibrant coral reefs in Hikkaduwa, and whale sightings near Mirissa and Kalpitiya. Sperm whales are the most-common whales sighted, with others, including blue whales, minke, melon-headed and dwarf sperm whales.

East Coast (Trincomalee, Pigeon Island, Batticaloa)

- **Season:** May to September
- **Best time:** May and June
- **Why?** Monsoon winds shift, bringing calm conditions, warm waters (27-30°C), and great visibility (20-40m). May and June provide the clearest visibility, and if diving the Hermes, time your visit according to moon phase to ensure you visit when currents are less fierce.
- **Highlights:** Snorkelling and diving with blacktip reef sharks at Pigeon Island, WWII wrecks in Batticaloa, including the HMS British Sergeant, and HMS Hermes. Trincomalee's Underwater Museum is an interesting dive, with a mix of scuttled ex-Navy vessels and history telling statues.



Sri Lanka's dual-season diving makes it a perfect choice for divers any time of the year - just pick the right coast depending on the season!

Add on a safari

Sri Lanka has several national parks, the most well-known being Wilpattu, Minneriya, and Yala.

Wilpattu National Park is the oldest and largest national park in Sri Lanka. It is known for its diverse wildlife, including leopards, sloth bears, elephants, jackals, crocodiles, deer, and water buffalo. It is also a great place for bird watching, with many species of birds found in the park. Located northwest, it is a good safari option to add on to a dive itinerary that includes Colombo in the west.

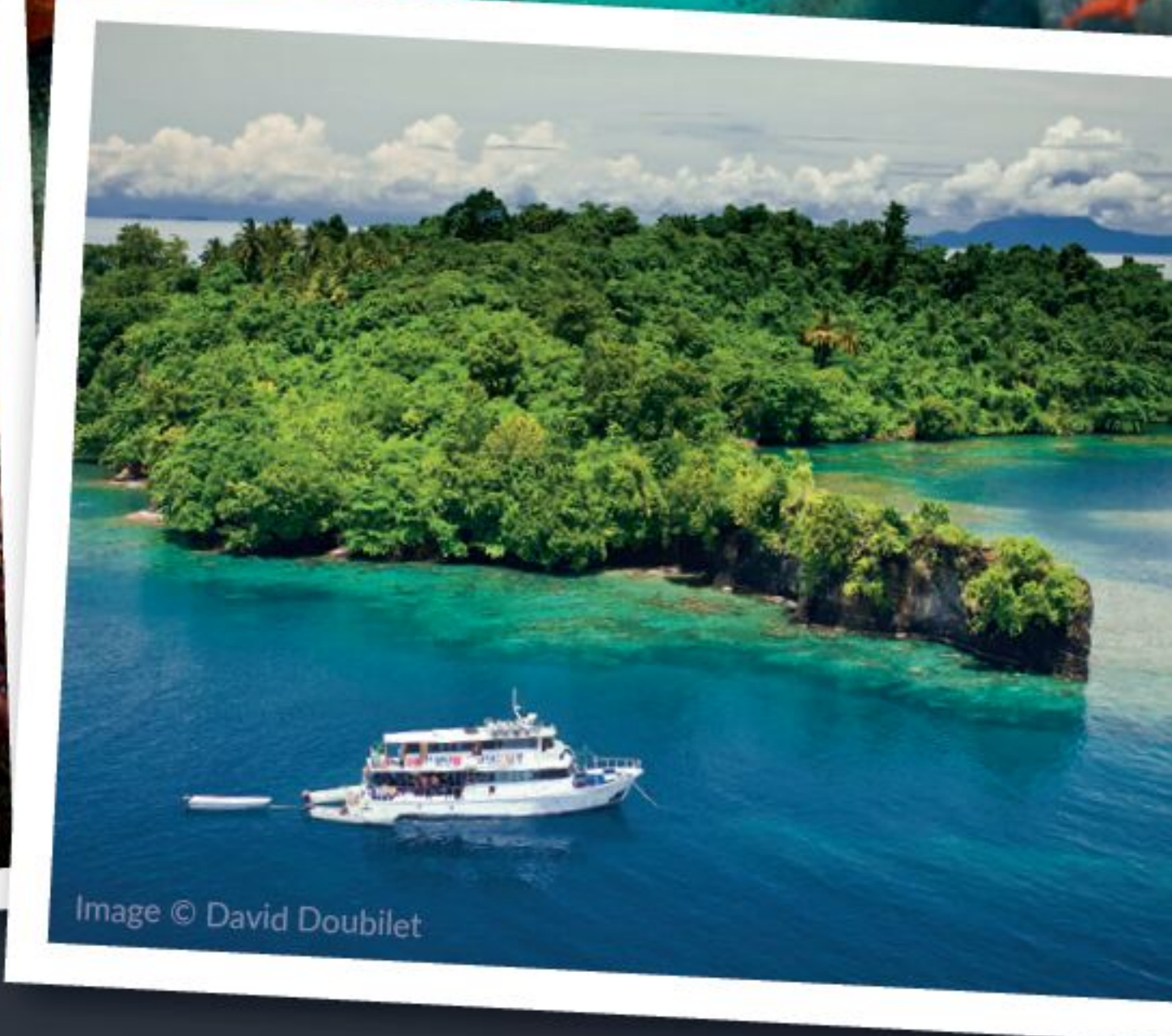
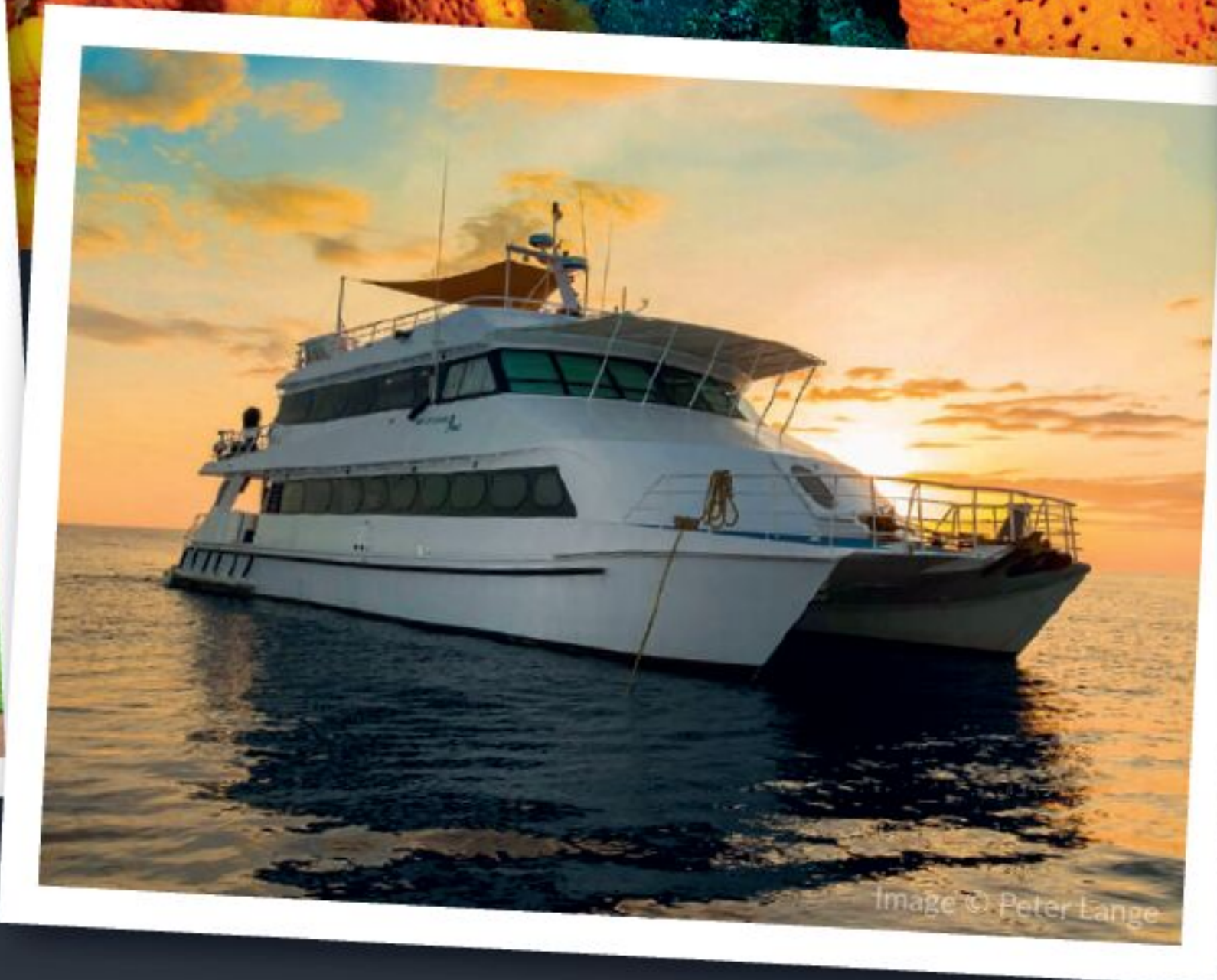
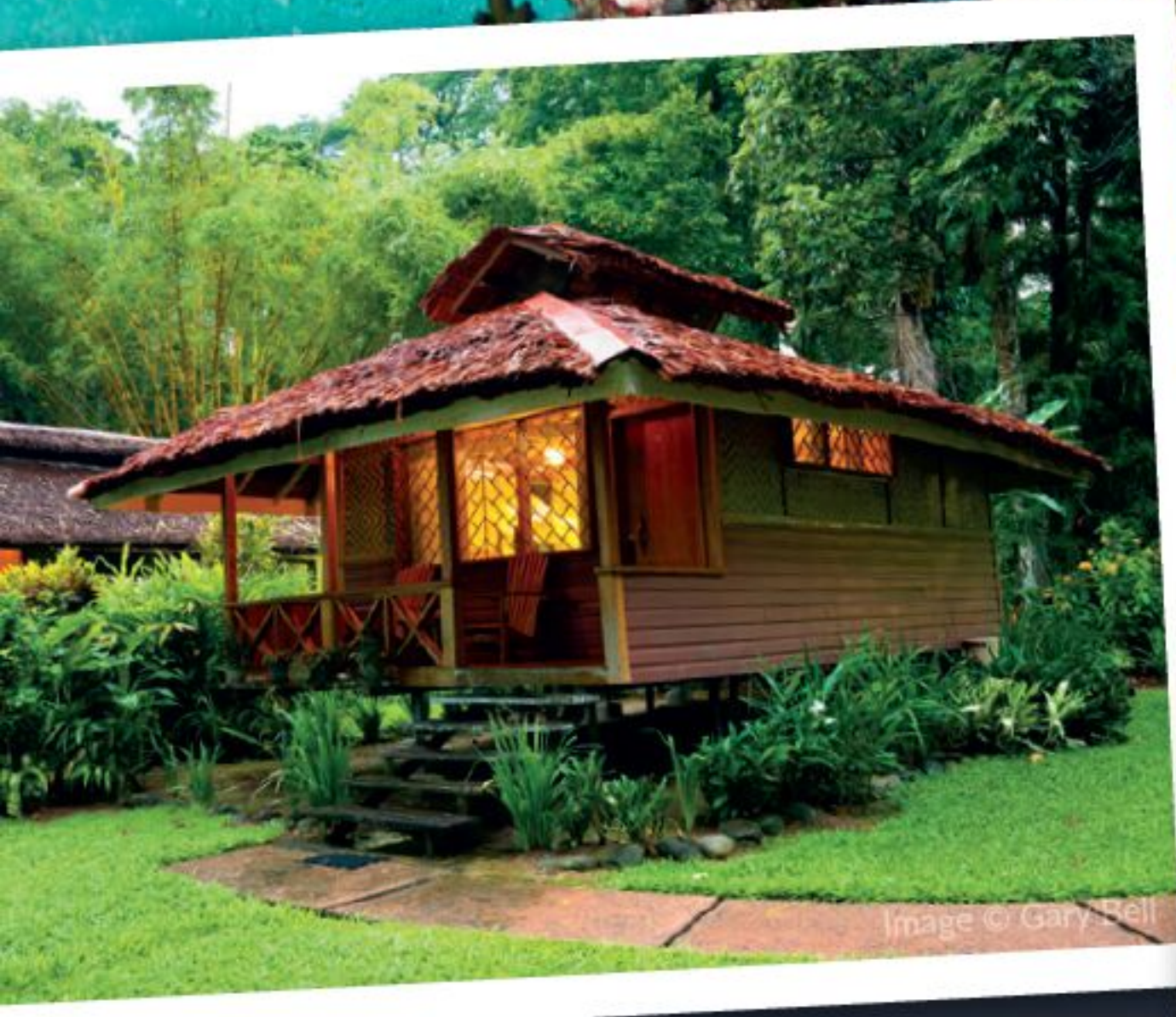
Minneriya National Park is famous for its large elephant gathering, which occurs annually between May and October. The park is also home to many other animals, including leopards, sloth bears, deer, and water buffalo. Additionally, it is a great place for bird watching, with over 160 species of birds found in the park. Located in central Sri Lanka, it's a good one to add on to an east coast dive itinerary.

Yala National Park is the most-visited national park in Sri Lanka. It is known for its high density of leopards, as well as its many other animals, including elephants, sloth bears, deer, and water buffalo. It is also a great place for bird watching, with over 200 species of birds found in the park. Located far south, Yala is convenient for a southwest dive itinerary.

Getting around

A dive safari in Sri Lanka often means long road trips - especially to the east coast, and for a variety of dive experiences, you'll probably want to visit a couple of destinations: Trinco and Batticaloa, Colombo and Kalpitiya, Mirissa and Kalpitiya. The best way to do this is by booking with a tour company. Diveplanit has partnered with Classic Wild to curate a selection of itineraries. ■

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UNIQUE AUSTRALIAN MARINE LIFE


Nigel Marsh focuses his attention
on the southern sand octopus

Text and photos by Nigel Marsh
www.nigelmarshphotography.com

Nigel Marsh

Nigel Marsh is an Australian underwater photographer, photojournalist and a budding marine naturalist. He has a great love of all marine life, no matter how big or how small. He is the author of several dive guides and natural history books, teaches underwater photography and leads special photography group tours. Visit his website for more information:

www.nigelmarshphotography.com



Australian waters are home to an incredible number of octopus species. Around Australia are 30 species of octopus, and while many of the tropical species are also found in the neighbouring countries of the Indo-Pacific region, the ones found in temperate waters are unique to the nation. One of these unique temperate octopus is the rather strange southern sand octopus.

The southern sand octopus (*Octopus kaurna*) is well named as this octopus likes to hide in the sand. Orange in colour, the southern sand octopus is unlike most octopus in that it lacks the ability to change colour, having no chromatophores in its skin. However, as it hides in the sand by day and emerges at night to feed on small crustaceans and fish, the ability to change colour would be wasted in the dark. A medium-sized octopus, the southern sand octopus can have an arm span of up to 50cm. They also have very thin arms and can stretch their head and body to appear very thin and elongated.

The sand burrowing behaviour of the

southern sand octopus is quite unique. Most cephalopods that bury in the sand simply cover themselves with a layer of sand. The southern sand octopus uses its siphon to blast water into the sand, which loosens the sand particles like quicksand, allowing the octopus to quickly burrow with its arms. It leaves two arms extended to the surface to create a ventilation shaft and uses mucus to stabilize the sand around it, creating a cocoon burrow.

Little is known about the life cycle of the southern sand octopus. Mating swarms have been observed, with a group of these octopus piled on top of each other. They probably only live for one year, dying after mating and egg laying. The females producing large eggs, which are most likely hidden in the sand. The southern sand octopus is found in shallow sandy bays off South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and southern New South Wales. They are only seen at night, with the many jetties and piers of South Australia and Victoria the best place to see one or several during a dive. They are easy to observe and photograph at night as they don't appear to be too disturbed by torch light, unlike some other cephalopods.

The southern sand octopus is one of the most unique cephalopods divers will encounter in the temperate waters of southern Australia. ■

“ They are only seen at night, with the many jetties and piers of South Australia and Victoria the best place to see one or several during a dive ”

Southern sand octopus

DIVING WITH A PFO

To clear up any confusion divers may have about patent foramen ovale (PFO), Douglas Ebersole MD shares how he explains the condition to patients

The heart has four chambers: two on the top (right and left atria) and two on the bottom (right and left ventricles). As our heart is forming before we are born, the wall between the two bottom chambers is solid, but the wall between the two top chambers is not.

One wall grows up from the bottom, while the other grows down from the top. Where they overlap is a flap — not a hole, as some people have described. The reason for this structure is that once we are born, the purpose of the right side of the heart is to pump blood to the lungs to get oxygen, and then the blood returns to the left side of the heart, where it is pumped to the body.

As a fetus, however, we don't use our lungs; they are collapsed and full of fluid. Oxygenated blood comes from the placenta, empties into the inferior vena cava, and then goes to the right atrium. In the fetus, the right side of the heart tries to pump blood to the collapsed, fluid-filled lungs, which is difficult and results in higher pressures in the right atrium than in the left atrium. This differential pushes open the flap between the two top chambers and allows the oxygenated blood from the placenta to bypass the right side of the heart and enter the left atrium. From there, the oxygenated blood goes to the left ventricle and is pumped to the body.

When we are born, the lungs open, which makes pumping blood to them much easier. This results in lower pressure in the right atrium compared with the left atrium and slams the flap shut. In about 75% of people, this flap between the two atria will seal within the first year or so of life and make a solid wall. In about 25% of people, however, it never seals and is called a patent foramen ovale. The presence of a PFO is a normal variant in humans and not a disease.

In the 25% of divers who have this flap between the atria, bubbles that the lungs normally filter can cross from the right atrium to the left atrium under certain loading conditions, resulting in decompression sickness (DCS).

When doing a bubble study, we inject agitated saline into a vein, which results in tiny bubbles that reflect the ultrasound. This mass of bubbles enters the right atrium and should go to the right ventricle and then to the lungs. In people with a PFO, however, the bubbles will cross from the right atrium to the left atrium. We determine the PFO's size by observing how many bubbles go across and if they cross at rest or require a manoeuvre, such as a Valsalva, to cross.

As best we can tell, a PFO increases the risk of DCS by about fivefold. While that may sound bad, remember that it is a relative risk. The absolute risk of DCS in a diver with a



PFO is quite small. For recreational diving, the risk of DCS is about two episodes per 10,000 dives. Therefore, a diver with a PFO could expect about 10 DCS episodes per 10,000 dives or one episode per 1,000 dives, which is a small absolute risk.

When a diver with a PFO gets DCS, we have to determine if the PFO is a contributing factor. Research indicates that four types of DCS are related to a PFO: cerebral, spinal, inner ear, and cutaneous (skin).

Whether or not a diver with DCS has a PFO, the options are always to either stop diving or dive more conservatively. The issue is the inert gas load, not the PFO itself, so anything that limits inert gas loading will decrease the likelihood of recurrent DCS. We recommend diving shallower, staying within no-decompression limits, making fewer dives per day, using nitrox with your computer set to air, performing long safety stops, and not engaging in any strenuous activity for several hours after diving.

If a diver has recurrent DCS of any of the four types related to a PFO despite using conservative dive practices, we may offer a PFO closure, which is an outpatient procedure that takes less than an hour. After the procedure, the diver takes aspirin and clopidogrel (Plavix) for three to six months and then has a repeat echocardiogram with a bubble study. If that shows no right-to-left shunting, the diver can return to diving without restrictions. ■

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From the DAN Medical Line

DAN medical information specialists and researchers answer your dive medicine questions

Contact lenses

Q: Is it safe to wear soft contact lenses while diving?

A: Many divers wear contact lenses without issue during their dives. It's crucial, however, to be aware of potential challenges, such as increased dryness or irritation due to factors like dry air in the dive mask, prolonged wear, mask squeezes, or exposure to saltwater. Maintaining good hygiene practices, including thorough handwashing before handling lenses and avoiding contamination, is essential.

The general recommendations for divers who wear contacts include using preservative-free lubricating drops, ensuring the dive mask fits properly to minimise leakage, and having a back-up pair of glasses in case of discomfort or issues underwater. Individual tolerance and experiences may vary, and divers should be attentive to any discomfort, redness, or irritation during a dive. If any of those signs occur, discontinue the dive and seek medical attention. If you have specific concerns or problems related to wearing contacts while diving, consult an eye care professional or an ophthalmologist, especially one with expertise in dive medicine, who can provide personalised advice and recommendations.

Low iron levels

Q: Does DAN have information regarding diving for individuals with low iron levels or who have undergone an IV iron infusion?

A: Anaemia itself may not categorically prohibit diving, but your doctor should clear you for diving only after considering multiple factors, including identifying the cause of your anaemia. One concern revolves around the impact of anaemia on exercise tolerance, a crucial aspect for divers who may need reserve strength and endurance for emergencies. Anaemia diminishes the blood's oxygen-carrying capacity, potentially affecting stamina and the ability to respond effectively in challenging underwater situations.



A significant worry related to anaemia is its potential to induce a rapid or irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia). When coupled with exercise and the vascular fluid shifts that occur with diving, anaemic divers may face an increased risk of heart problems, particularly if they are predisposed to or have existing cardiovascular conditions. Anaemia imposes an augmented workload on the heart as it compensates for decreased oxygen levels.

Factors such as anaemia severity, response to the infusion, and overall health affect the waiting period before resuming diving after a required IV iron infusion. Following an iron infusion, the body requires time to replenish and utilise iron, enhancing haemoglobin levels and oxygen-carrying capacity. The recovery period varies; it can take weeks to months for the body to fully adjust and stabilise iron and haemoglobin levels. No diving should occur soon after receiving iron infusions and during recovery.

Clearance for diving hinges on individual response to iron treatment, normalisation of iron levels, improvement in anaemia, and the restoration of exercise capacity. Close monitoring and assessment by your physician team are essential to your return to diving.

If you have a medical question send an email to medic@dan.org World.DAN.org

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Mustard's MASTERCLASS

Alex Mustard takes a closer look at high-end mirrorless cameras

Photographs by Alex Mustard

These days it's said that 'when two or three are gathered together in the name of underwater photography, that the mirrorless debate will be among them!' Everyone accepts that mirrorless cameras are the immediate future for underwater photography, but the debate rages about when to jump. Many have already. Others maintain that their current SLR is all the camera they need and they are better off investing in diving than gear. Both views are correct.

If we're diving into this debate, there are three truths on the subject we must start with. First, the camera manufacturers have decided that the future is mirrorless, and this is where we will see all the new capabilities and specifications. This decision, it must be said, was of course made in their interest, not ours. Second, that SLR cameras didn't suddenly become poor cameras just because mirrorless cameras arrived. Don't believe the marketing hype. They are still excellent underwater cameras! And finally, the outcome of this debate is only going in one direction. Of the last four overall winners of UPY, three of them were full frame mirrorless shots, while one was full frame SLR. And on my own workshops I'm increasingly seeing full frame mirrorless being the most-popular system on any week.

The mirrorless revolution definitely caught the photography industry a little by surprise. As little as ten years ago almost no serious shooters were using Sony cameras, the market was dominated by the big two of Nikon and Canon. But Sony invested heavily in mirrorless, releasing impressive cameras that changed everything. Within five years Sony accounted for about 50% of serious camera sales and Nikon and Canon were scrambling to catch up. Canon brought the first real contender in the R5, which recovered market share and satisfied topsiders. Quite a lot of underwater Canonistas took the leap too, but while this camera was the real deal on land, it didn't deliver universally underwater. I know several photographers who bought housings and then after a trip or two went back to their SLRs for underwater work. Other friends who were Canon shooters switched to Sony

and more recently to Nikon when their impressive Z8 was released (helping restore Nikon's market share). The main criticism of the original R5 was its electronic viewfinder that struggled with the high contrast underwater scenes that we typically compose, falling a long way short of the view offered by the optical viewfinder of an SLR. If you had to sum it up, it was fine for macro, but frustrating for wide angle.

Then towards the end of last year the Canon R5 Mark 2 hit the shops and housings swiftly followed. Was Canon fully back in the underwater game able to stand shoulder to shoulder with the top guns: Sony's A7RV and Nikon's Z8? I have been very fortunate to be able to use all three over my last three visits to the Cayman Islands.

I shot the reefs first using the Sony A7RV, then the Nikon Z8 and in January, the Canon R5 Mk 2, providing a unique opportunity to evaluate the three cameras for underwater shooting. And my conclusion, they are all far more similar than they are different.

Jump on a photography forum and you will be welcomed into the world of measurebators – who are far more interested in specs than pix. They love nothing more than fanboying (they are always men) over their favoured product and concluding everything else is from the stone-age. You'll read their posts about these three cameras, where the differences are put under the microscope. Yes, all three of these cameras have slightly different strengths and weaknesses, but for real world underwater shooting they all offer very comparable performance. And importantly, all three of them offer a superior and more enjoyable shooting experience to any SLR. Something that could not be claimed about their direct ancestors.

The Canon's superpower is autofocus. All mirrorless cameras of this generation have seriously moved autofocus on from the era of SLRs, but the new Canon R5 Mk2 takes it on the furthest. It is fast and smart, able to work out what it should be focusing on, grabbing it and keeping in tenaciously in focus. That said you do need to get on its wavelength to get the most out of it, I missed as much as hit on my first macro dive with the camera, which left me shocked. ►

The R5 camera autofocus
sets new standards with
macro subjects



The R5 camera excels in
many types of shooting



The Canon R5 Mark 2 viewfinder delivers underwater



But after a few days of adapting to how the intelligent autofocus thinks, it was clear to me it was the most potent of them all with typically tricky macro subjects.

The other big underwater improvement over the first generation R5 is the electronic viewfinder, which is bigger, brighter and truer to life than the original. And importantly it also handles those high dynamic range scenes in a more similar way to SLRs. The R5 also really impressed me with its image quality at high ISO, and with its battery life, the best I had experienced in a mirrorless camera that isn't way bigger than your old (with a mirror) camera.

The take-home message is that Canon is back in business underwater. By that I mean that Canon loyalists no longer need to think that the grass is greener elsewhere.

The R5 Mk2 absolutely holds its own against the top underwater options from Nikon and Canon. I wouldn't put any of them substantially ahead of each other, but all three are more capable and more enjoyable to shoot than any SLR.

It maybe all change in the camera world, but there is no debate that it is a good time to be an underwater photographer. ■

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DIVING WITH... VANESSA TORRES MACHO

PT Hirschfield chats with underwater photographer, scuba instructor, tech diver, business owner and expedition leader Vanessa Torres Macho about her expansive expertise beneath the surface and topside

Photography by Vanessa Torres Macho or as credited



Sea lions

While most divers focus primarily on one or two specific areas of interest, underwater image-maker Vanessa Torres Macho is the consummate all-rounder. She's a scuba instructor and freediver with underwater photographic interests in marine life, deep wrecks, commercial fashion and cosplay, maternity and pole dancing, portraits, seascapes, macro and wide angle.

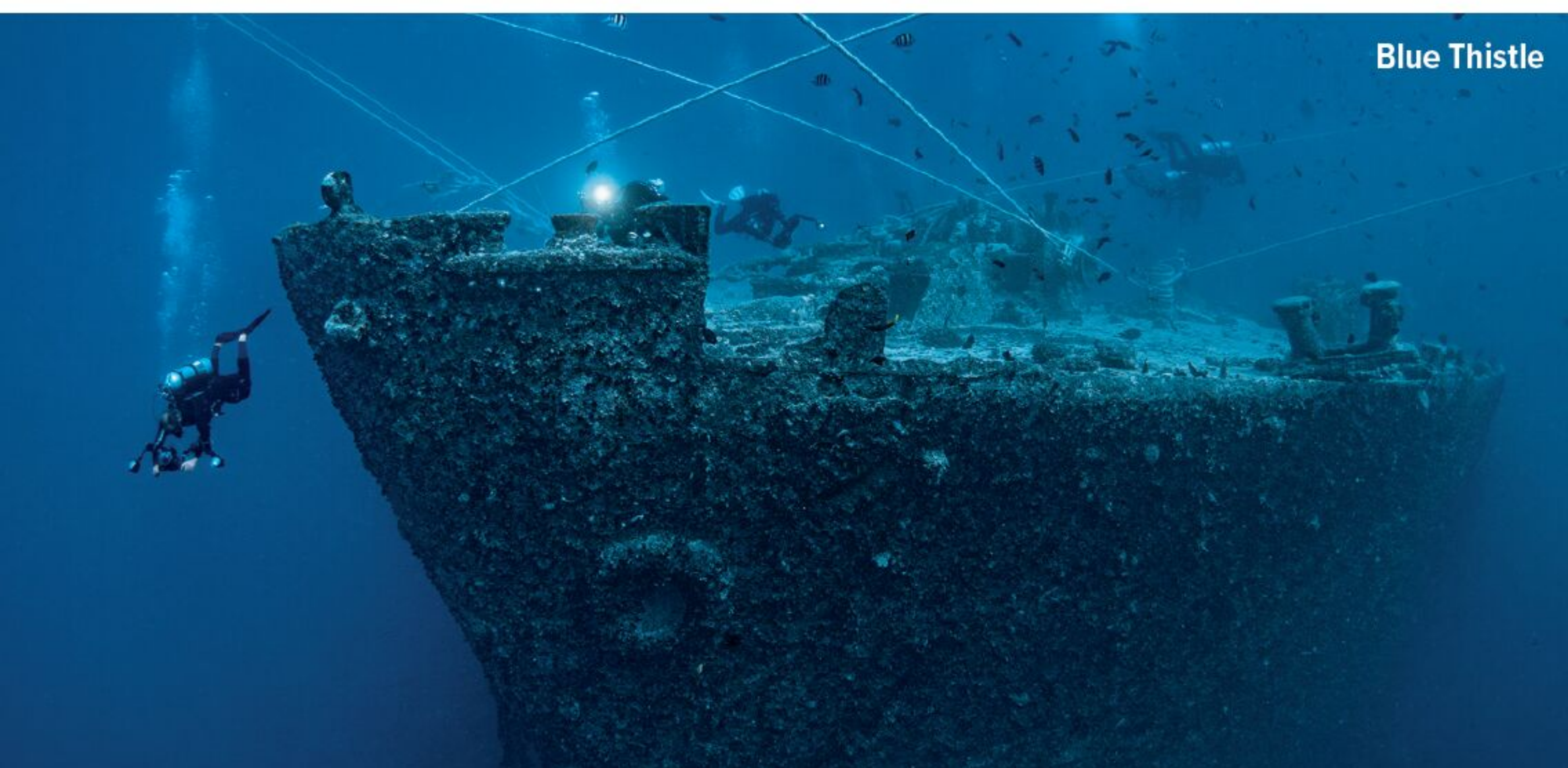
She has cave certifications and is tech certified through GUE, having logged almost 3,000 dives. In her underwater photography gear retail business Aquatic Imaging Australia, Vanessa marries deep technical expertise and dive trip coordination with service committed to exceeding customer expectations.

Vanessa's own underwater images are expansive, sensuous and sumptuous, repeatedly gifting the viewer with streaming sun rays and deep blue portals that frame other worlds. Lighting - both natural and creative - elevates Vanessa's images in ways that imbue the strong foundations of her Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. The surface of the water is often the subject, interplaying with divers, wrecks and marine life.



Vanessa in her natural habitat

© Rick Reimber



Blue Thistle



Anemone and attendant clownfish

Over the past two years, Vanessa's photographs have been successful in several major competitions. Her photography has been featured in a number of exhibitions, including Ocean Photographer of the Year 2023 and Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year 2024.

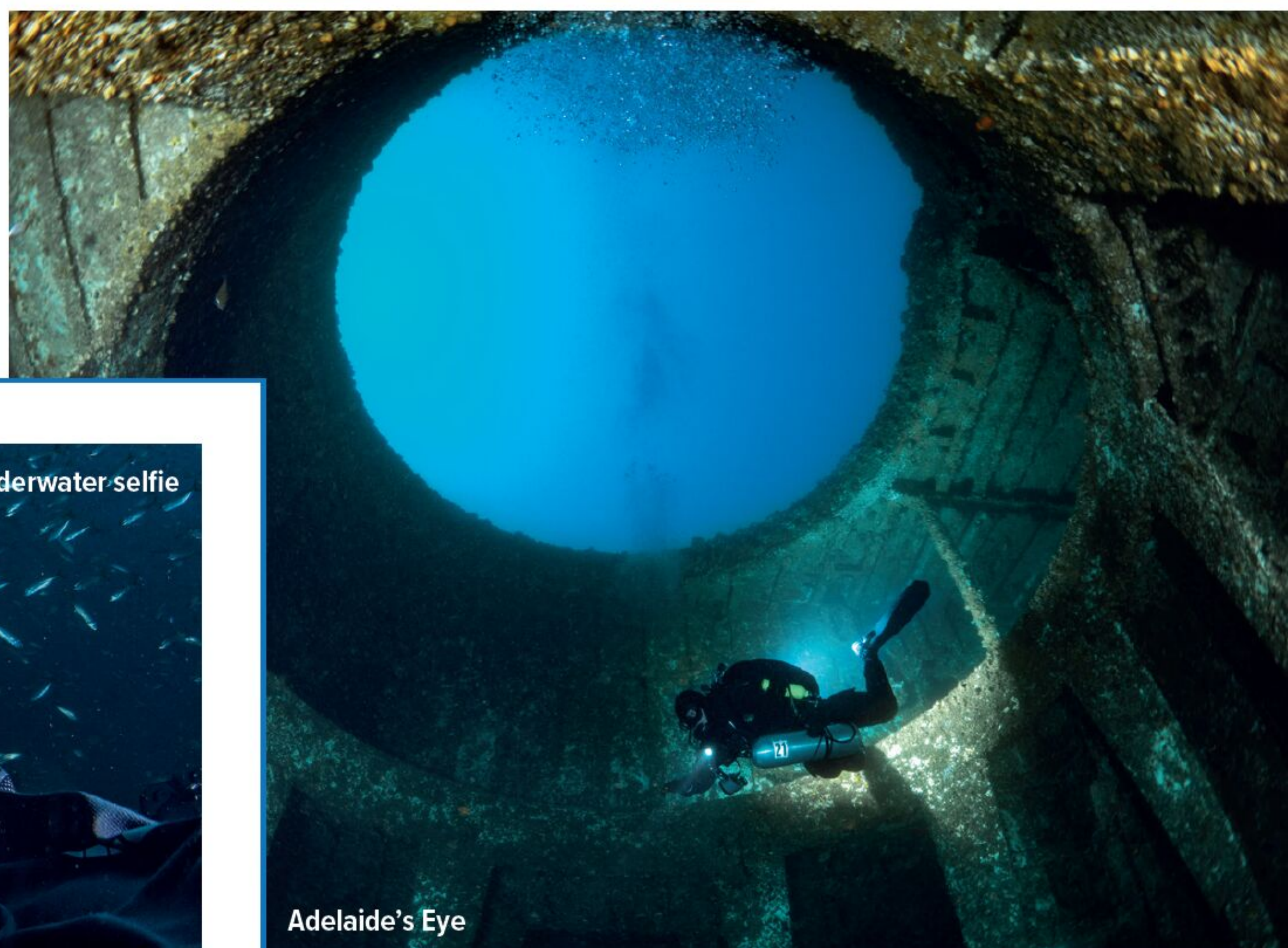
Reflecting on the scope and breadth of her affinity for all things aquatic, Vanessa shares: 'The underwater world has a tight grasp on my life. Water holds power over me. It feeds my sense of adventure.' Exploring and capturing magic of world beneath the surface is an 'obsession' that began for her in childhood.

Vanessa was born an identical twin and raised in Madrid, Spain. While she certified in her homeland in 2003 as an open water diver, then as an Instructor in 2006, she has vivid memories of 'trying my dad's old scuba tanks in the family's backyard pool as a little girl'.

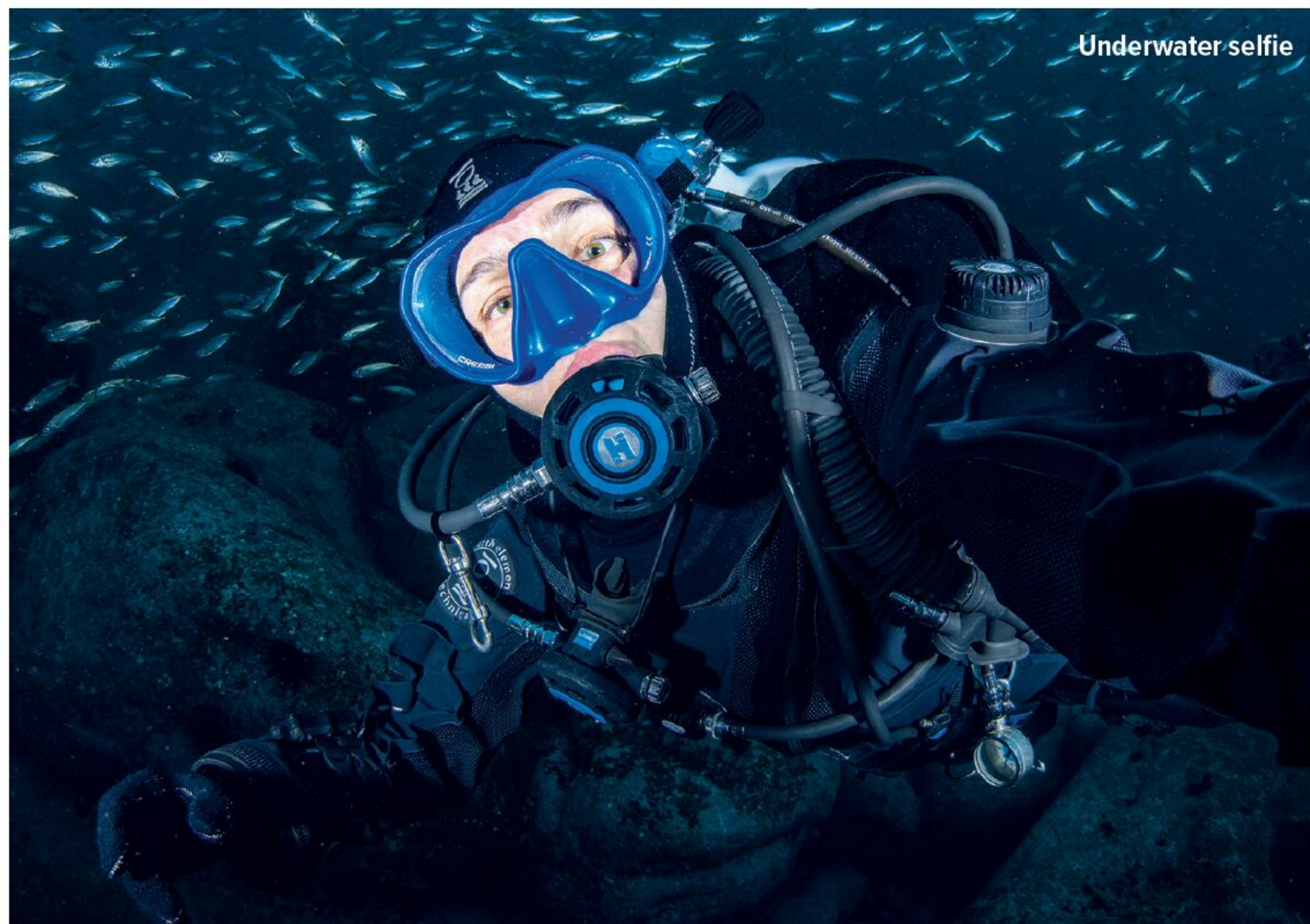
Her father had been an immigrant in the 1950s, growing up in Melbourne before returning to Spain. It was this connection that inspired Vanessa to visit Australia in 2010 after living and working as a PADI dive instructor in Spain, Dominican Republic, Mexico and Egypt.



Vanessa also has a flair for artistic imagery



Adelaide's Eye



Underwater selfie



Turtle gliding over hard corals

Vanessa credits her time as a dive guide on Red Sea liveaboards for inspiring her passion for underwater photography: 'When I wasn't teaching diving, I could concentrate on finding marine life for customers and their big camera rigs. It made me wonder if I could also take pictures underwater? This was a catalyst for buying my first underwater setup, an entry level Olympus mirrorless camera.'

Vanessa arrived in Queensland with her partner Rick for a 'six month break' which to date has expanded to fill 15 years in Australia. They became managers of a dive shop in WA for two years before relocating to Sydney. Vanessa acquired her business Aquatic Imaging Australia mid-pandemic and operates through partner company Dive Centre Bondi.

She attributes her exceptional customer service to being 'very much a people pleaser', elaborating: 'My philosophy is that if I have some knowledge within me that others might be interested in or benefit from, then why not share it? I want my customers to have the best possible experience, since that's what I would be expecting too.'

'As a self-taught photographer and a very active shooter, I know the struggles of beginner underwater photographers and can relate to experienced shooters. I can help them avoid making costly mistakes. My store's services include retail, local and overseas expeditions, underwater photography workshops, mentorship and photoshoots.' ►

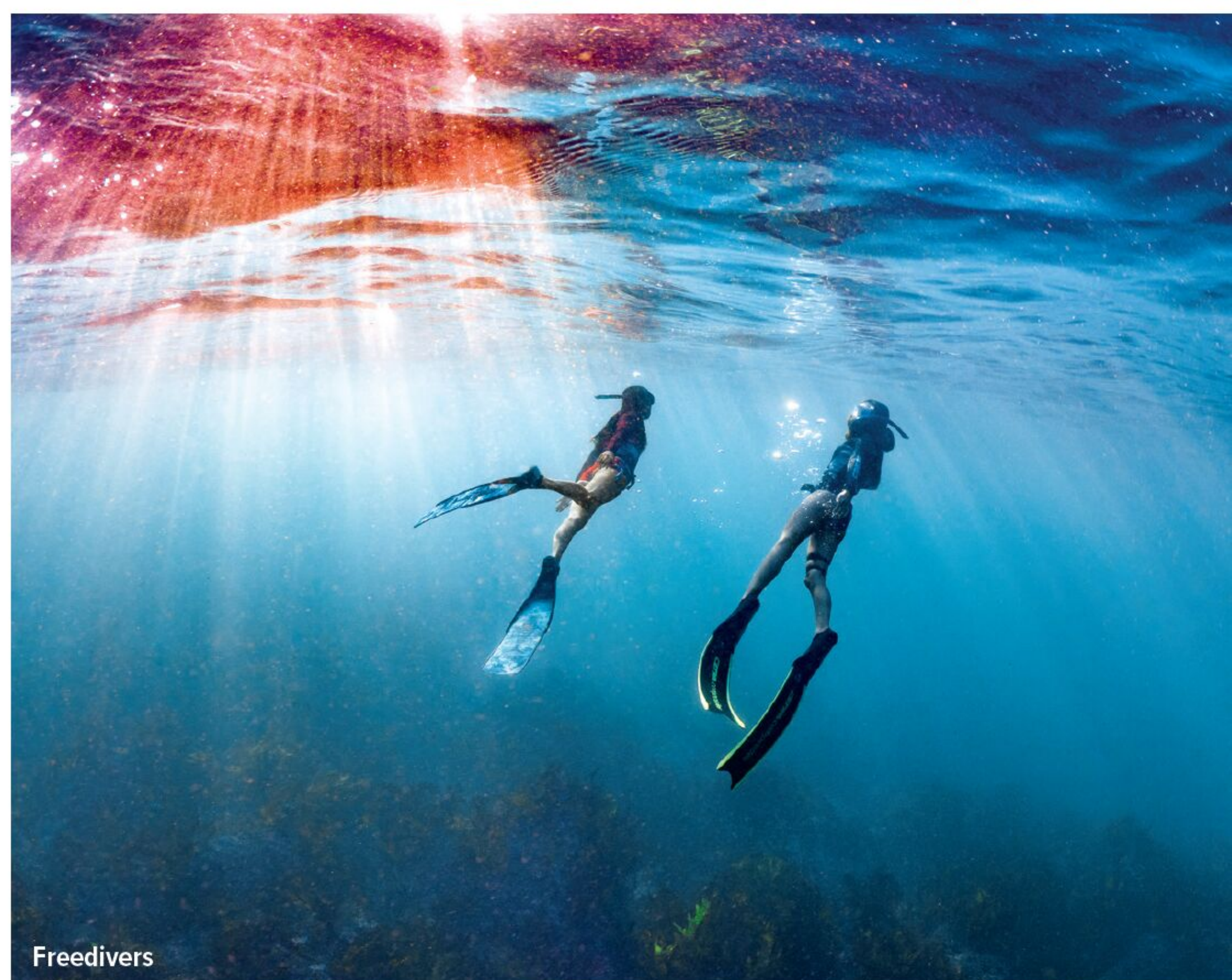
Bondi split shot



Manta ray



HMAS Adelaide



Freedivers

Vanessa enjoys deep wreck photography - usually beyond 45m - as well as directing and conducting bespoke photoshoots for clients: 'I especially love doing underwater pole dancing shoots. And I've done a couple shoots where I submerged a handmade swing in the ocean, using experienced freedivers as models.'

Vanessa was involved behind-the-scenes with the making of acclaimed Australian 2023 film *BlueBack* by Robert Connolly. She trained one of the lead actors in scuba and freediving, and assisted with the shooting of some of the water scenes. Keen to see continued support of women in the spheres of (especially technical) diving, underwater photography and cinematography, Vanessa has championed this cause through initiatives under the banner of Liquid Lens.

Increasingly, Vanessa finds herself focused on leading dive expeditions via Aquatic Imaging Australia. Previous local trips include South West Rock, Solitary Islands, Eden, North Stradbroke Island, Jervis Bay and Montague Island. Further afield, adventures have included the Revillagigedo Archipelago for mantas and sharks, the Red Sea for reefs and wrecks, and the Maldives' Fuvahmulah to dive with tiger sharks.

'In 2025 we'll be visiting Komodo, Papua New Guinea, Lady Elliot and Galápagos. 2026 has some orca action in Norway pencilled in. We're still deciding on other locations, and that's the exciting part. Anything is possible.'

Vanessa's also dived in Belize, Canada, New Zealand, Raja Ampat and Fiji. She notes the walls of Egypt, cenotes of Mexico, dolphin encounters and the wrecks of Bikini Atoll amongst her highlights. She confesses: 'Large animals are my primary agenda. I'm still chasing the perfect hammerhead image!' ▶

“ Large animals are my primary agenda. I'm still chasing the perfect hammerhead image! ”



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“ As a self-taught photographer and a very active shooter, I know the struggles of beginner underwater photographers and can relate to experienced shooters ”



Meanwhile, Vanessa's local diving rarely disappoints: 'This city sits right in the path of the humpback whale migration. I've been lucky enough to dive with these giants on four separate occasions in Sydney's waters. Most weeks, my buddies come back from dives with stories involving whales, sharks, dolphins, mola mola, seven gill sharks and more.'

'In 2019, we discovered a fishing boat at 75m out of Sydney, sitting on an incredible sponge and coral garden. The image was shared in a fishing chat. We eventually found the owner and heard first hand his survival story, how he almost perished when his vessel sank.'

Vanessa is keen to promote a message of hope, calling for kindness to waterways and marine wildlife: 'We have just one ocean which is screaming for help. We are currently treating our ocean as our local dumpster, and as an endless provider of food resources.'

Individual action matters when we do them together. Your actions can make an impactful change.' ■

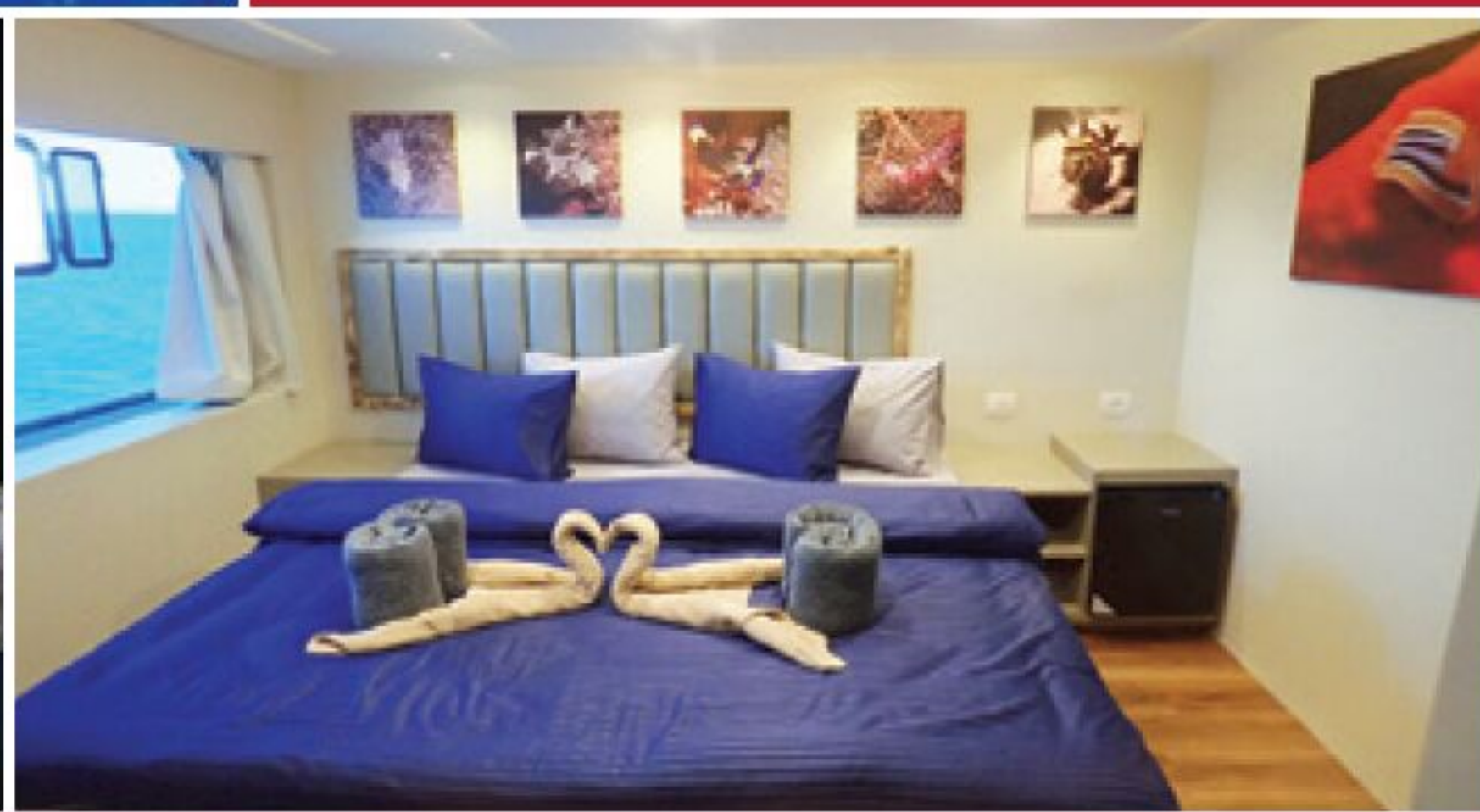
Vanessa Torres Macho

You can connect with more of Vanessa's photography at www.vanessatorresmacho.com. Check out her Aquatic Imaging Australia underwater photography retail store and dive expeditions at: www.aquaticimagingaustralia.com.au

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CONSERVATION CORNER



The thrill of shark diving

Words & photography by Vanessa Mingnon

I will always remember my first jump in the water. I stood there, looking at dozens of shark fins breaking the surface, wondering if spending several years of savings was a mistake after all!

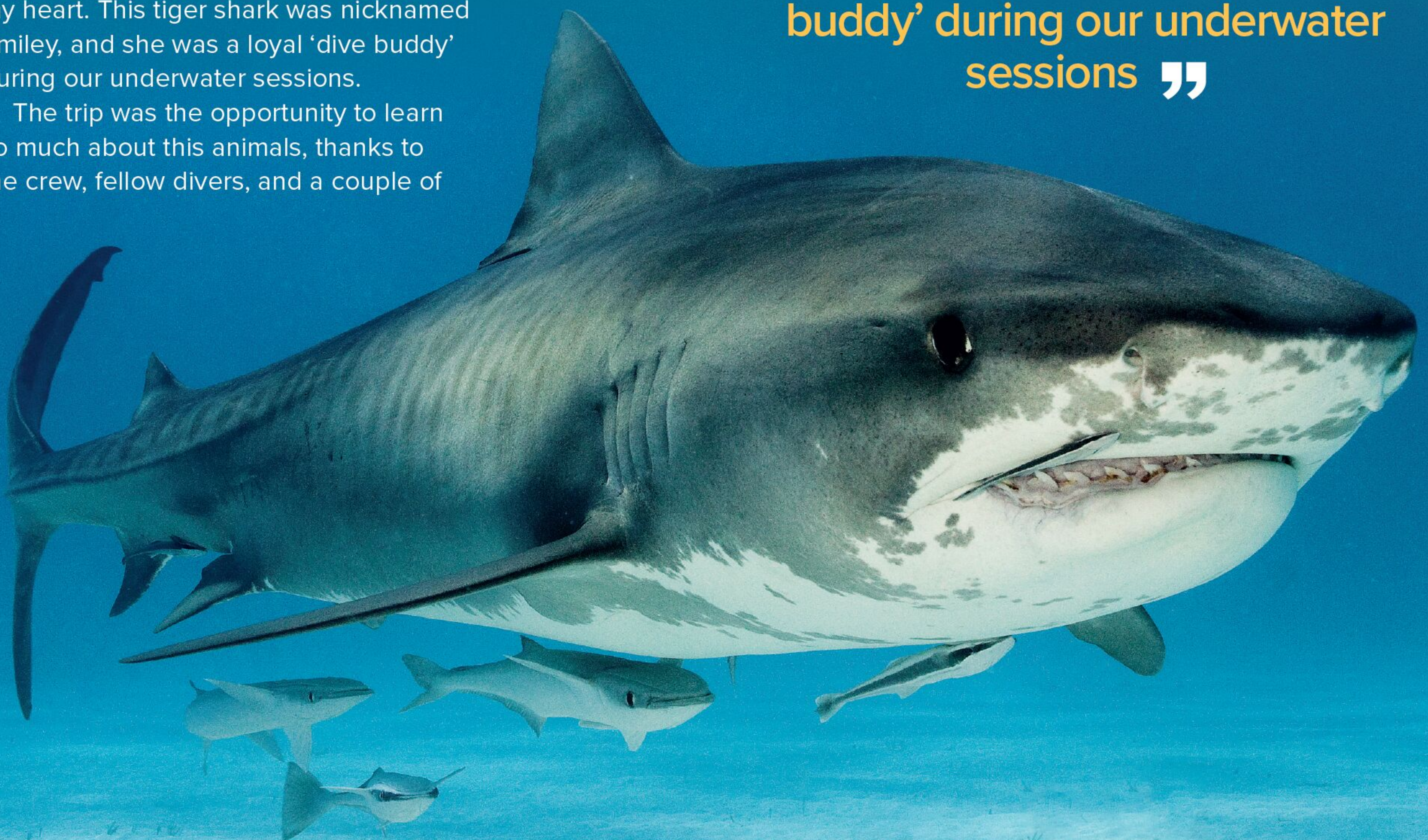
Thankfully it wasn't. I took the leap and entered a brand new world, a world that opened my eyes, my heart, my inspiration. There were sharks everywhere, reef, tiger, lemon, nurse just swimming peacefully and minding their own business. I went to the bottom and sat there, watching and enjoying the moment. I had expected adrenalin, possibly fear, but never did I expect to feel so much peace and quiet.

One tiger shark attracted my attention, partly because of her physical beauty and the way she moved gently around us, but mostly because part of her mouth had been ripped off, probably by a fishing hook. It broke my heart. This tiger shark was nicknamed Smiley, and she was a loyal 'dive buddy' during our underwater sessions.

The trip was the opportunity to learn so much about this animals, thanks to the crew, fellow divers, and a couple of



“ This tiger shark was nicknamed Smiley, and she was a loyal ‘dive buddy’ during our underwater sessions ”





“ I will always remember my first jump in the water. I stood there, looking at dozens of shark fins breaking the surface, wondering if spending several years of savings was a mistake after all! ”

shark conservationists who had joined us. I knew nothing about shark finning at the time, and I remember my throat tightening up and goose bumps on my arms when I found that that an estimated 100 million sharks are slaughtered every year for shark finning and shark fin soup. 100 million! I could not, and still can't, comprehend the hugeness of that number.

I could not, and still can't, comprehend the cruelty of the industry, as the fins are cut and sharks, still alive, are thrown

back to the ocean to drown. I could not and I still can't, comprehend that we would kill animals that are essential to the ocean health, and therefore essential to the planet and, sorry if I am stating the obvious, therefore essential to us! When I got back home, I could not stop thinking about Smiley. I felt pain, sadness, frustration and anger and I didn't know how to shake those emotions. I starting talking about her to whoever would listen... Turns out not many people in my usual circle were interested. ►



“ This became the first article I ever wrote! And to this day the most important one to me ”

I so needed to share and do something about it. So one day, I found myself in front of a piece of paper, trying to convey into articulated words everything that my heart felt.

This became the first article I ever wrote! And to this day the most important one to me. Smiley inspired me in so many ways. It's hard to explain and some might feel that I am exaggerating, but I truly feel she helped me find my voice and my passion, but most importantly she taught me to learn more and to educate myself about what is happening to our world, our oceans, and our living creatures. They say that ignorance is bliss, and at times I really wish I didn't know. But turning a blind eye is not an option". ■



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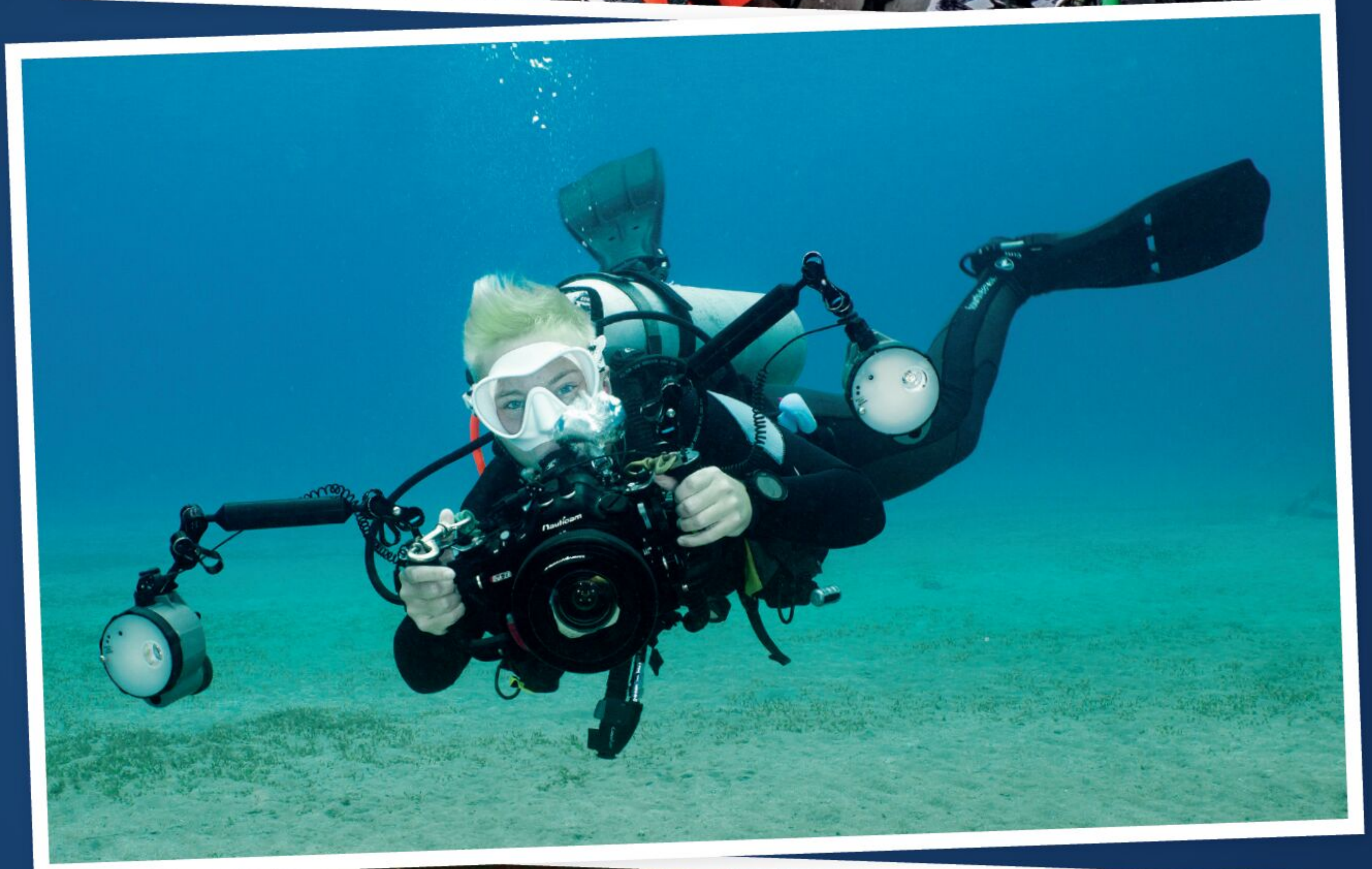
Grace Westgarth is a role model for youth divers worldwide and was once a keen youth diver herself. Grace grew up fond of the water, regularly swimming and snorkelling on family holidays.

At age ten, on a holiday to Egypt, Grace and her dad completed their open water diving certification together, a decision that would forever change her life. Now 22, Grace is a Divemaster with almost 400 dives and regularly dives in Cornwall, where she studies a degree that encompasses both her love for diving and her passion for photography - Marine and Natural History Photography.

Grace believes that starting diving at a young age allowed her plenty of time to gauge her path through the industry, stating she feels her 'diving journey has been unrushed'. She slowly developed the skills she required to be a good diver, which allowed her to nurture her interests rather than feeling she was jumping from rank to rank with little motivation. Because of this, she has tried different types of diving, such as drysuit and sidemount, and volunteered with a local dive club during their pool sessions.

Looking back on her journey as a youth diver, Grace would tell her younger self how important it is to stop worrying about being behind everyone and comparing herself to other divers. She is very grateful that she started diving at such a young age because, as a child, Grace had more time and energy to develop a passion for diving. It has allowed her the success she has today!

Over the past few years, Grace has joined talk panels on youth in diving and given her own presentations on underwater photography. She is currently focused on a project called 'Thalassophile', a photography series focused on individuals with stories centred around the ocean. Grace remains a very positive role model for youth in diving and demonstrates one of the many different paths available within the dive industry, highlighting that something is suited to everybody wishing to make diving a career! ■



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Did you know?

The main advantages of rebreathers are extended gas endurance, low noise levels, and lack of bubbles!

ENTERING THE WORLD OF CLOSED CIRCUIT

Don Silcock explains why he is going down the route of closed circuit rebreathers, and discusses how a familiarization session with two units ended up with a rather expensive purchase – and the promise of more adventures to come

Photographs by Don Silcock



Various CCR parts

CCR familiarization

If you had asked me just three years ago whether I would ever consider spending five figures on a rebreather, my response would have been a resounding 'no' – probably embellished with an additional colourful turn of phrase... Back then, I had no idea how they worked, saw no need for one, and frankly considered them glorified death traps.

And yet, just last week, my new closed-circuit rebreather arrived in Sydney. After parting with another (albeit smaller) four-figure sum to clear customs, it's finally in my hands. Soon, I'll be taking it to Bali to begin my formal training.

How Did I Get Here?

A good question... I first dipped my toe into technical diving during the pandemic as it seemed like the perfect antidote to lockdowns and restricted travel. Plus, I was curious to see what it was all about.



Filling tanks with oxygen

What I discovered was an entirely new way of diving, one that was not only safer but also opened the door to a whole new world of underwater adventures.

At the time, my ultimate goal was a trip to Bikini Atoll to dive the nuclear wrecks – the World War Two warships sunk during the Able and Baker atomic bomb tests in July 1946. To make that a reality, I needed to qualify for dives to 55m, along with the extended decompression requirements that came with it.

I did exactly that. Then, in June last year, I made the long journey to Bikini and finally dived those incredible wrecks. But in the process, I had a revelation... diving deep on air simply wasn't a good idea. The narcosis was just too much.

I also realized something else: I wanted to do more of these kinds of adventures. And the only safe way forward meant embracing CCRs.

The Parallel Universe of Rebreathers...

It's one thing to decide to cross the Rubicon and embrace the so-called death machine, but quite another to figure out which rebreather to choose. With so many options, the decision isn't straightforward. ▶



Antoine preparing parts for assembly

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The first major choice is between manual/mechanical (mCCR), automatic/electronic (eCCR), or hybrid (hCCR) operation. In simple terms, mCCRs require the diver to manually adjust the gas mix and volume in the loop, while eCCRs handle it automatically. Hybrid systems sit somewhere in between. Then comes another big question, the configuration - back-mounted, side-mounted, or chest-mounted?

And finally, there's the weight factor. Traditional CCRs have tended to be big and heavy, which posed a serious challenge for me. I already travel with around 50kg of dive and photography gear, so adding a 25kg rebreather was a definite non-starter!

Trust Your Instructor

My Italian dive buddy, Filippo Borghi, is an outstanding underwater photographer with a passion for capturing the deep reefs of the Mediterranean. He crossed the Rubicon two years ago and now regularly dives to 80m on CCR.

He shared a piece of invaluable advice with me: 'Find an instructor you truly trust and dive with them regularly as you gain confidence and experience with the rebreather'. That way, if something ever goes wrong, you'll be with someone who knows your diving style and can assist in an emergency.

It sounded like excellent advice. So, I turned to Antoine Martin in Bali, the same instructor who had put me through the wringer to prepare for Bikini Atoll last year. Antoine's initial guidance was simple: Define what you want to achieve, then come up to Amed for a weekend familiarization course based on those objectives. This would give me first-hand experience with the most suitable rebreather technology before committing to a system.

My Objectives

Antoine's advice made a lot of sense, so I took my time thinking through my goals. In the end, I landed on three key criteria:

- **Compact and lightweight** – The CCR should be as small and light as possible to make travel easier.
- **Manual operation (mCCR)** – Minimizing reliance on electronics.
- **Versatile** – Suitable for learning but capable enough to grow with me into the future.

The Familiarization

Antoine runs Bali Dive Trek in Amed, northeast Bali, and is a highly experienced technical and CCR instructor. In his dedicated, air-conditioned rebreather room, he has seven different CCR units - all of which he dives regularly. ►

Starting the assembly



The Triton CCR is compact and minimal



Completed unit ready to dive



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Based on my objectives, he recommended testing two units: the KISS Sidewinder (a side-mounted rebreather) on the first day and the Triton (a chest-mounted unit) on the second.

We started with a classroom session on the first morning, covering the fundamental theory of CCR diving, basically the dos, the don'ts, and what to expect underwater for the first time. Antoine then walked me through the preparation process for both the KISS and Triton units, explaining their setup and maintenance requirements.

In The Water

There are several key differences between diving open-circuit and closed-circuit, but for me, the most striking was the silence and the impact that had on marine life. Suddenly, fish that would normally dart away barely seemed to notice me. The second major difference was buoyancy control. Unlike open-circuit diving, where you can fine-tune your position by inhaling or exhaling, CCR diving requires a completely different approach.

Of course, I had read about these differences, and Antoine had emphasized them in our briefing, but experiencing them firsthand was something else entirely. From an underwater photography perspective, the possibilities with CCR seem almost endless. Without noisy exhalations to startle marine life, I could get closer than ever before. Overall, the two-day familiarization answered many of my questions and confirmed that embracing CCRs is the right move.

The Outcomes...

I decided to 'invest' (because spending a lot of money sounds better that way) in the new Triton II CCR, which boasts several improvements over the earlier version but remains compact and lightweight—just 12kg when optimized for travel.

Antoine, who, like Triton's parent company M3S, is French, connected me with the key people behind the unit. As a result, I was able to secure one of the first production units to be released.

The full kit arrived in Sydney, cleared customs and was delivered by FEDEX, within just five days of leaving the factory in southern France. It's now packed and ready to head to Bali.

My initial training is only a couple of weeks away, and while I'm feeling excited, I also have a touch of nervousness about the challenge that lies ahead. Watch this space... ■

Don Silcock

Don is Scuba Diver's Senior Travel Editor and is based on Bali in Indonesia. His website has extensive location guides, articles and images on some of the best diving locations in the Indo-Pacific region and 'big animal' experiences globally.

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A guide to **DIVING** **THE GOLD** **COAST**

PART TWO

Tweed Heads is located at the southern end of the Gold Coast and sits right on the border of Queensland and New South Wales. The town is a lovely holiday destination, much more low-key than the Gold Coast, and for the diver, it presents endless opportunities for underwater exploration.

Located off Tweed Head are numerous rocky reefs covered in corals and home to a fascinating variety of subtropical species. While most dive sites are only accessible by boat, with several charter boats operating in the area, this coastline also has a wonderful shore diving site in the Tweed River. However, the area's most-famous dive site is a small rocky outcrop called Cook Island.

Every dive destination needs a dive site that can be visited no matter what the prevailing conditions are like, and this site off Tweed Heads is Cook Island. Many of these all-weather sites are a little average and generally avoided if conditions allow you to go anywhere else.

“ The rocky reefs around the island are protected as a marine sanctuary as they abound with a diverse array of subtropical marine life ”

However, Cook Island is brilliant at any time of the year and never disappoints. Cook Island is the most-popular dive site in this area, and for good reason. The rocky reefs around the island are protected as a marine sanctuary as they abound with a diverse array of subtropical marine life.

There are around a dozen dive sites around the island, in depths from 6m to 22m, with one of the best all-weather sites being the Northern Ledge. This site has it all; in the shallows are boulders covered in hard and soft corals, these tumble down to a sandy plain and beyond this are numerous rocky outcrops that are always packed with life.

Did you know?

Grey nurse sharks (also known as sand tiger sharks) are unique in that they come to the surface to gulp air, but not to breathe. The air ends up in their stomach and helps make the shark more buoyant, so it can float motionless in the water watching for prey.



Most divers only explore the boulder wall, and it is easy to see why, as they will see prolific reef fish, numerous pelagic fish, wobbegongs, nudibranchs, sea stars and many sea anemones that are home to anemonefish and porcelain crabs. But a close look between the boulders will reveal lionfish, scorpionfish, leopard blennies, moray eels, octopus, cuttlefish and even Australian pineapplefish. Turtles are a special feature at Cook Island, with dozens often seen on a dive. Many hang out on the top of wall and get cleaned by surgeonfish, but they also use the boulders to tuck under for a sleep and to rub their bellies.

The sandy plain at the base of this wall is always worth a look as many stingrays, flatheads, grubfish, goatfish and other sand-dwelling fish are found here. Over the warmer months leopard shark and whitespotted wedgefish gather here, and can be lined up in rows, almost like they are waiting for you to take their picture. If you have time, heading across the sand to the many rocky outcrops in

depths from 15m to 18m can be very rewarding. Between these outcrops can be found stingrays, wobbegongs, turtles and the occasional blue groper, but it is the critters that gather in this area that make it special. Nudibranchs, sea stars, velvetfish, lionfish, dragonets, gobies, pipefish and if you are lucky maybe a ghostpipefish or frogfish.

At other sites around Cook Island there are ledges, caves and walls to explore that are just as packed with colourful corals and great range of marine life. Cook Island is the kind of place where you are likely to see anything. Grey nurse sharks visit here in winter; divers also see eagle rays, manta rays, groper and thick schools of pelagic fish.

Humpback whales are known to cruise around the island on their winter migration, and while underwater encounters are rare, you are likely to hear them singing their haunting melodies. There are dozens of other great dive sites in the Tweed Heads area, both north and south of the border. ►

Nigel Marsh explores the Gold Coast's far flung dive sites, this time focusing his attention on the southern portion of this divers' paradise

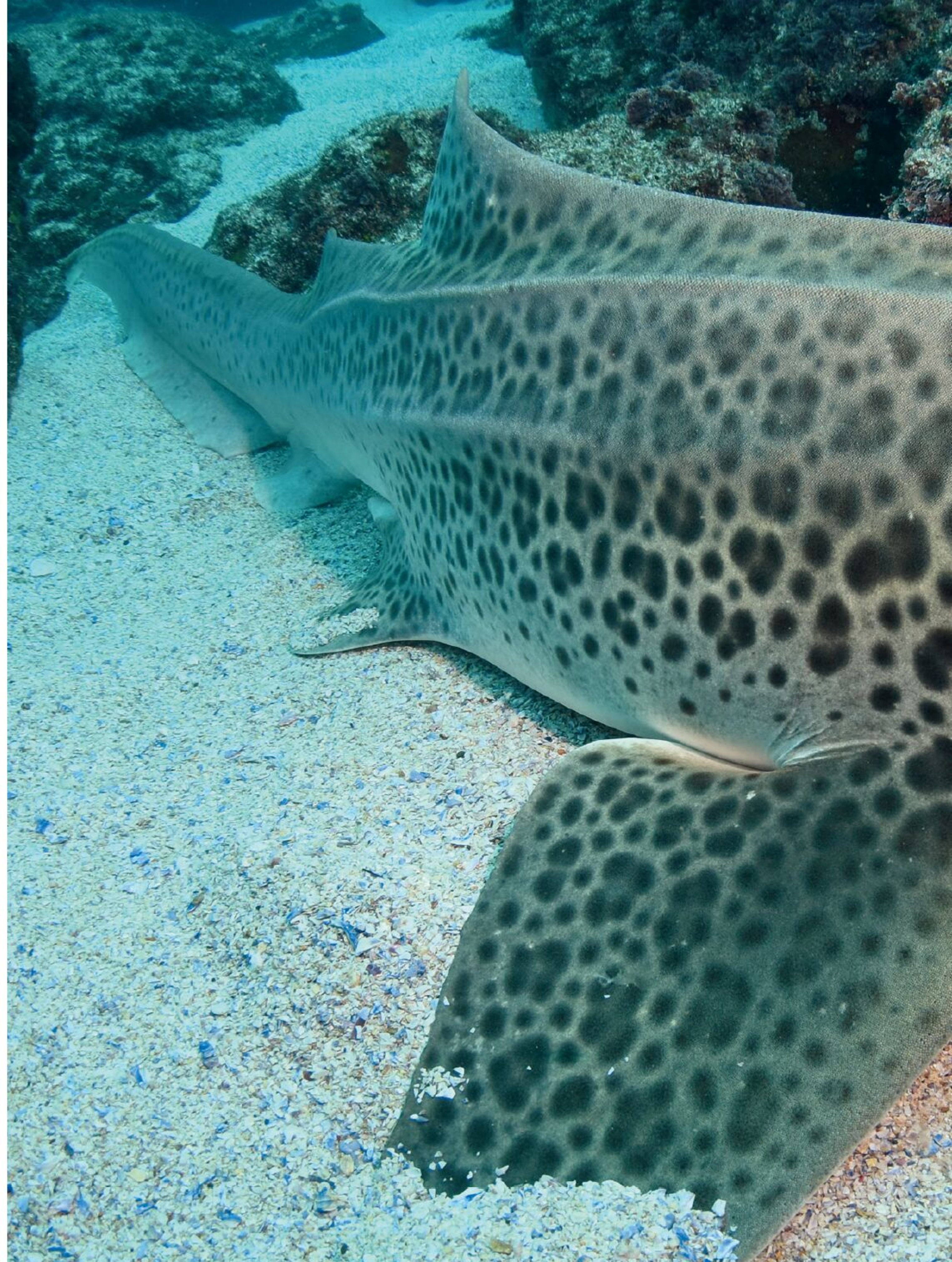
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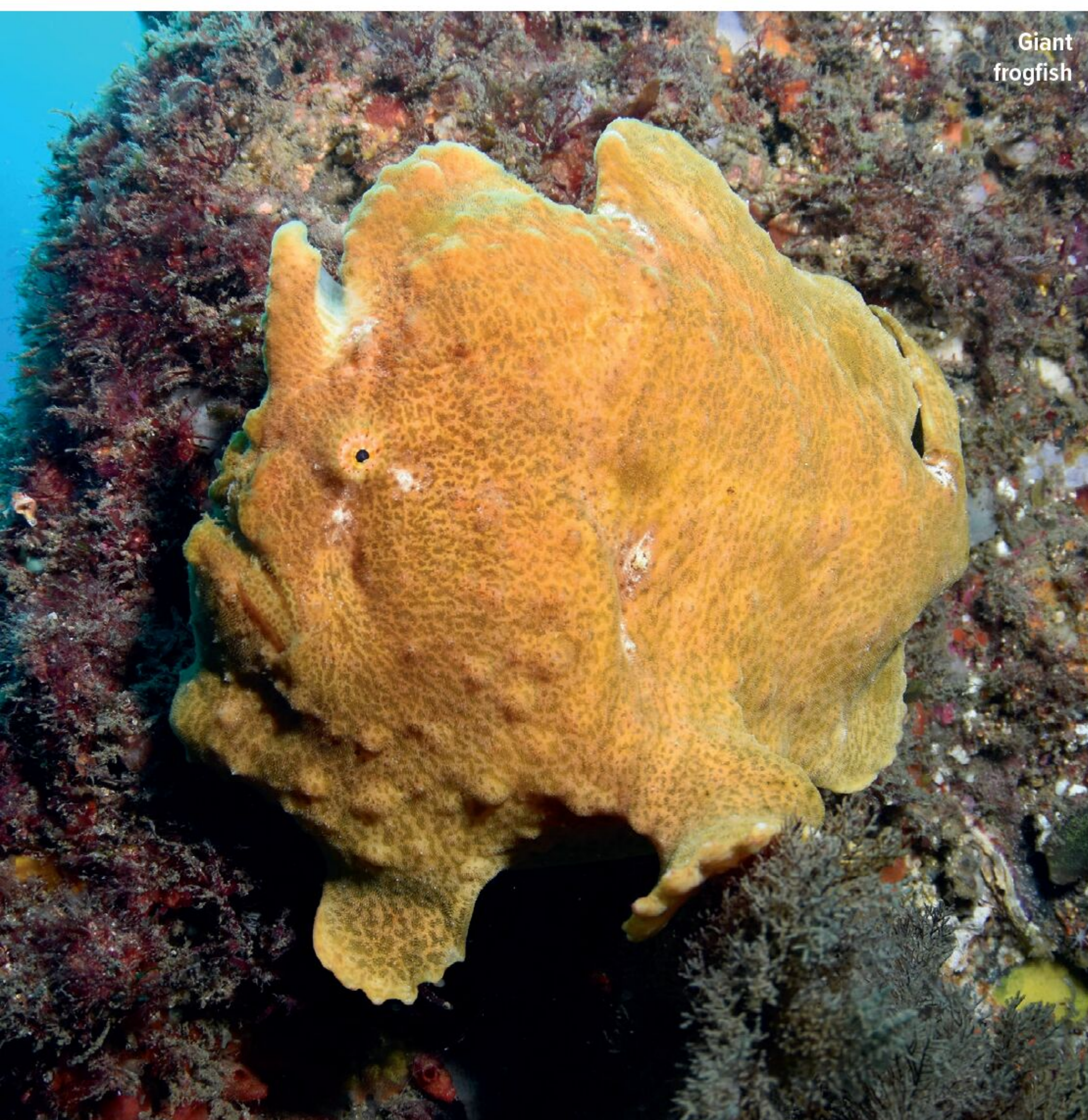
Australian whipray



Lined hermit crab



“ The Tweed River is also a great place to see frogfish and other muck critters like shrimp gobies, oyster gobies, blennies, nudibranchs, octopus, shrimps, crabs and ghostpipefish ”



Giant frogfish

Another popular spot is the Tweed River, which can be explored from the shore. Each weekend dozens of divers can be seen entering the water, on the high tide, to explore the rocky reef here in depths to 12m. The marine life found in the river can be very surprising, especially the variety and abundance of reef fishes, including leatherjackets, butterflyfish, goatfish, surgeonfish, snapper, scorpionfish, angelfish, damsels, morwongs, wrasse and moray eels. Divers have also had dolphins swim past them while exploring the river, as a large population reside in the area. The Tweed River is also a great place to see frogfish and other muck critters like shrimp gobies, oyster gobies, blennies, nudibranchs, octopus, shrimps, crabs and ghostpipefish.

South of Tweed Heads is an extensive rocky reef known as Fido's Reef. This reef varies in depth from 10m to 22m and the rugged rocky terrain here is a joy to swim around. This reef is covered in corals and sponges, and home to a diverse range of species; including turtles, wobbegongs, groper and leopard sharks over summer. This reef was named after the screw steamer Fido that smashed into the reef in 1907 and became a complete loss. Parts of the wreck can still be seen scattered across the reef.

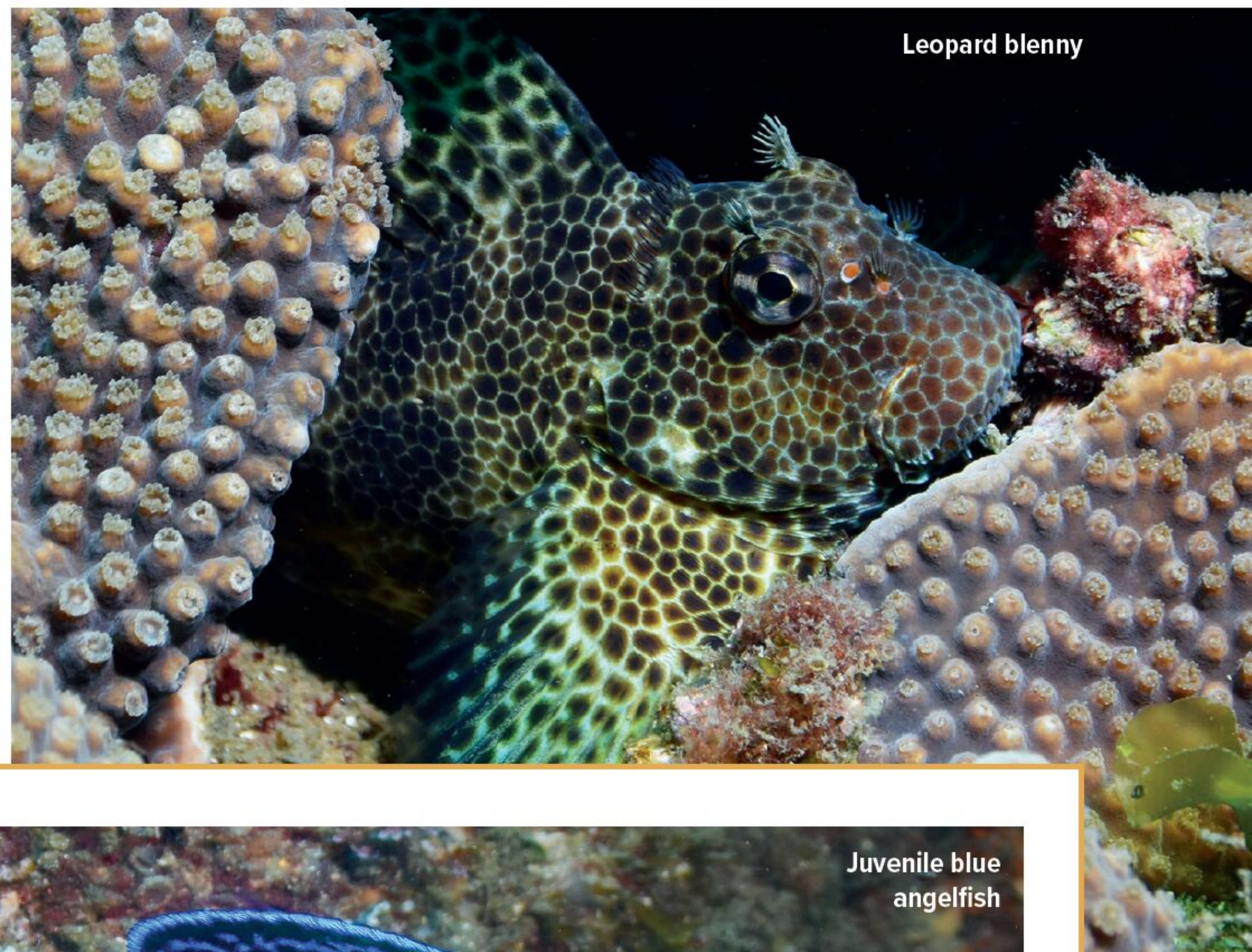


Leopard shark

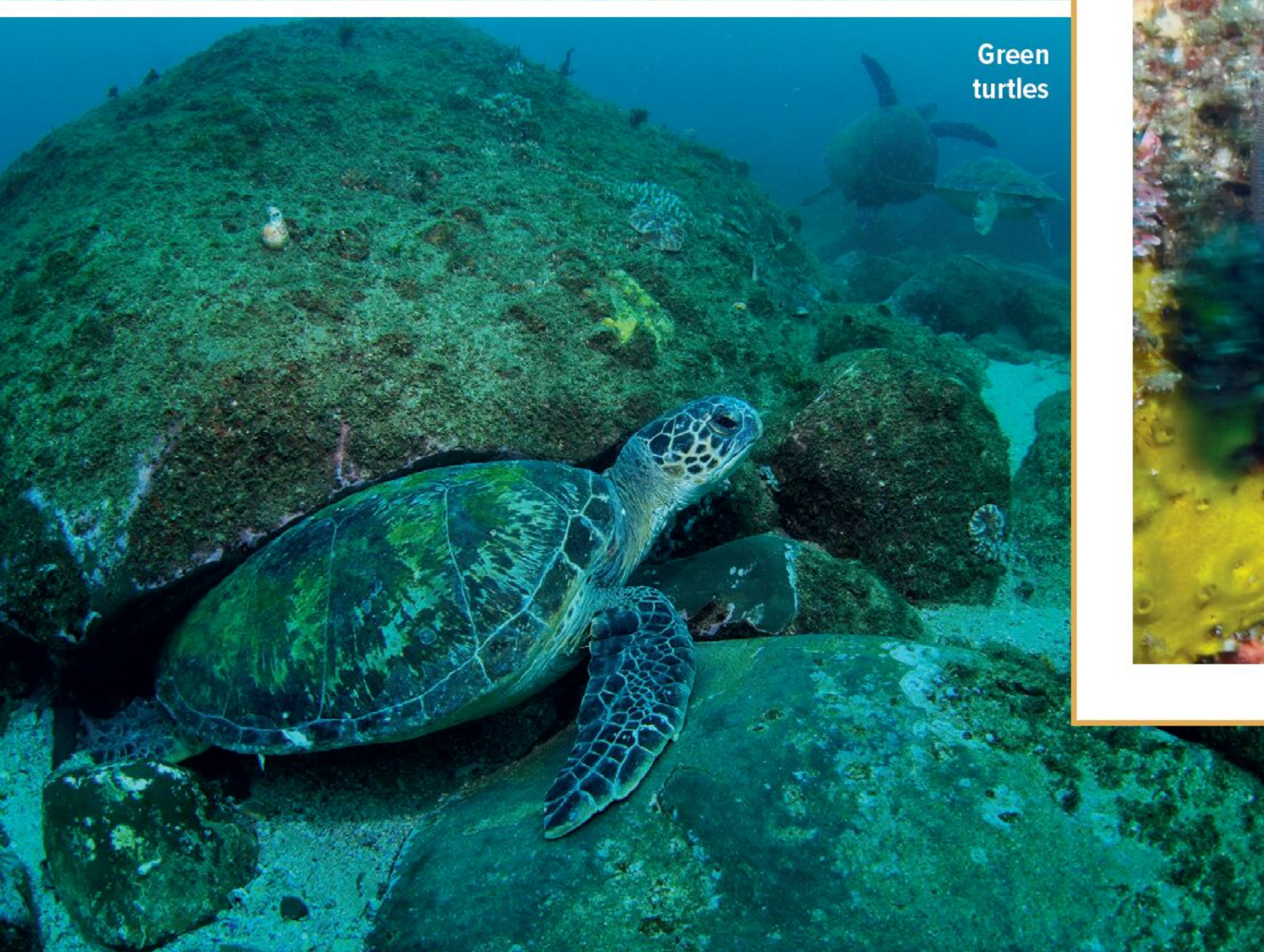
Gold Coast Dive Adventures

Gold Coast Dive Adventures run regular trips out to Cook Islands throughout the year. They also run regular trips out to Nine Mile Reef however this is for more advanced divers only and trips to this reef are mainly conducted in the winter months. Both Cook Island and Nine Mile Reef are about a 45-minute boat ride away.

goldcoastdiveadventures.com.au



Leopard blenny



Green turtles



Juvenile blue angelfish



Sea-star on Fido's Reef

Other wonderful reefs in the area include Five Mile Reef, Kingscliff Reef and Kirra Reef. But one of the best dive sites in this area is located way off the coast, nine miles to be precise, and is simply called Nine Mile Reef. Trips to Nine Mile Reef are regularly planned and regularly cancelled, as this is a site for experienced divers only and reasonably calm conditions are needed. However, even with calm conditions you may not get to dive as the reef often has strong currents, sometimes ripping by at three knots!

Nine Mile Reef varies in depth from 12m to 30m and the site is dominated by a large ridge of rock, but also has ledges, gutters and bommies to explore. The corals at Nine Mile Reef are lovely; black coral trees, gorgonians, soft corals, hard corals, sponges and ascidians. The reef also has a good population of reef fish and invertebrates, but divers don't come to Nine Mile Reef to look at coral and small stuff, as this is a legendary shark site. ►

When first dived in the 1960s divers used to see bronze whales and mako sharks quite regularly, especially if they were spearfishing. Today there are still sharks at the site, including the odd bronzie, but divers are more likely to encounter wobbegongs, grey nurse sharks and leopard sharks. The grey nurse shark are seen over winter and hang out in a gutter known as the 'shark pit.' The number of sharks seen can vary from a few to several dozens, however a few years ago we did a wonderful dive at Nine Mile Reef and counted over 100 grey nurse sharks!

Leopard sharks invade the reef over summer and are seen resting on the bottom by day. These lovely sharks feed at night, so are very docile and sleepy by day, and easy to approach for photos. Also seen at Nine Mile Reef are stingrays, wedgefish, eagle rays, schools of cownose rays, three species of wobbegongs, bamboo sharks, turtles, schools of pelagic fish and giant Queensland groper. On its day, if you can get out there, Nine Mile Reef is one of the best dives in Australia.

Visibility on the reefs off Tweed Heads is generally around 12 metres, with clearer water always found at Nine Mile Reef. The Tweed River can be surprisingly clear at times, but eight metre visibility is around average on the high tide. The visibility is always best after a week or so of southerly winds, and you can dive Tweed Heads at any time of the year. ■



Australian pineapplefish

Accommodation

Broadwater Tourist Park is located on the picturesque and sheltered shores of the Gold Coast Broadwater and offers powered camping sites and cabins. All cabins are air-conditioned and are clean comfortable and well-appointed with a full kitchen and outdoor BBQ facilities. The Tourist Park is a great place to be based for its proximity to Gold Coast Dive Adventures and for the surrounding attractions.

goldcoasttouristparks.com.au/parks/broadwater

“ The reef also has a good population of reef fish and invertebrates, but divers don't come to Nine Mile Reef to look at coral and small stuff, as this is a legendary shark site ”



Did you know?

The spotted wobbegong is a nocturnal ambush predator that uses its spotted pattern, beard of fleshy tassels and elongated fins to blend in perfectly with its surroundings.

Spotted wobbegong



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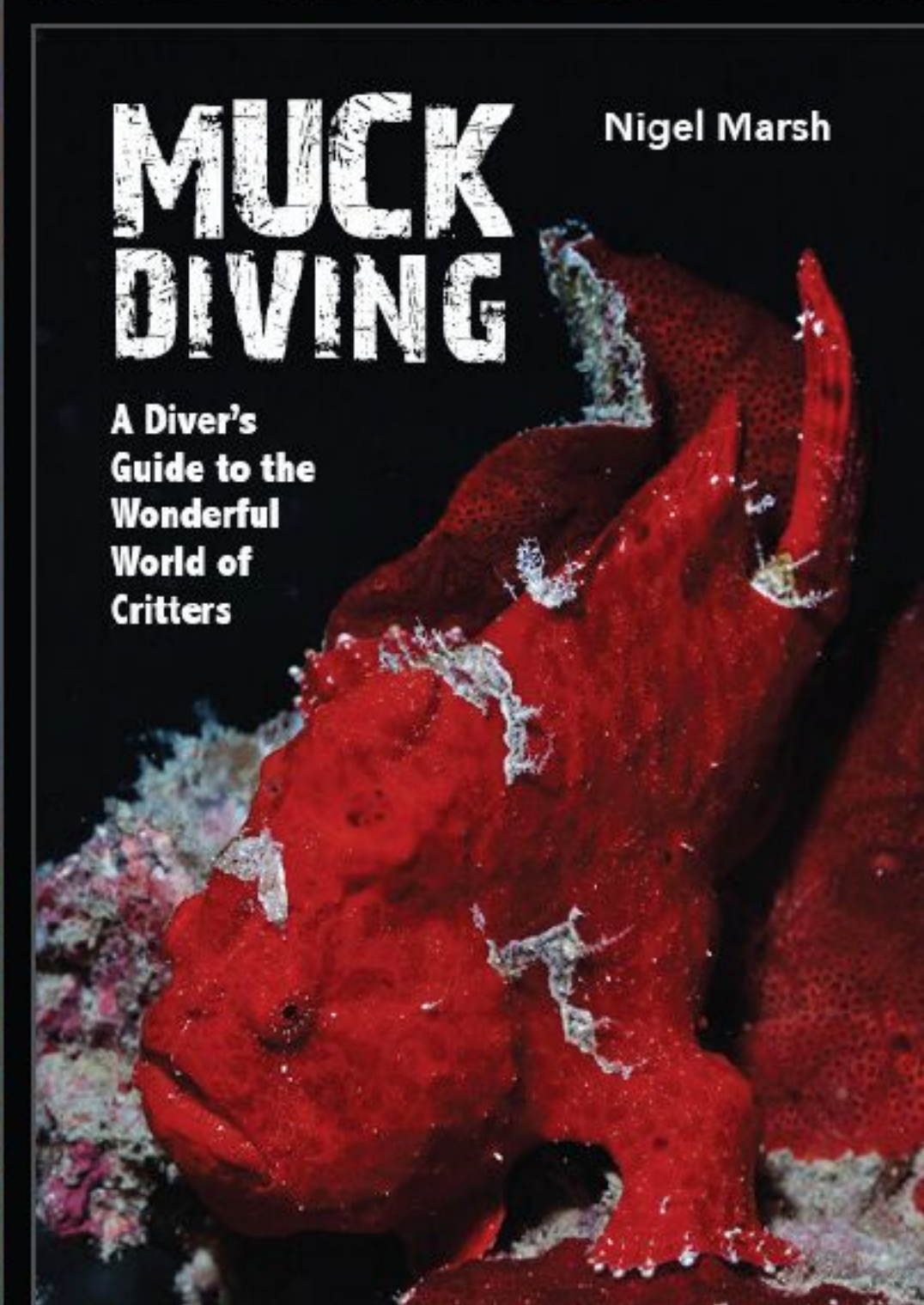
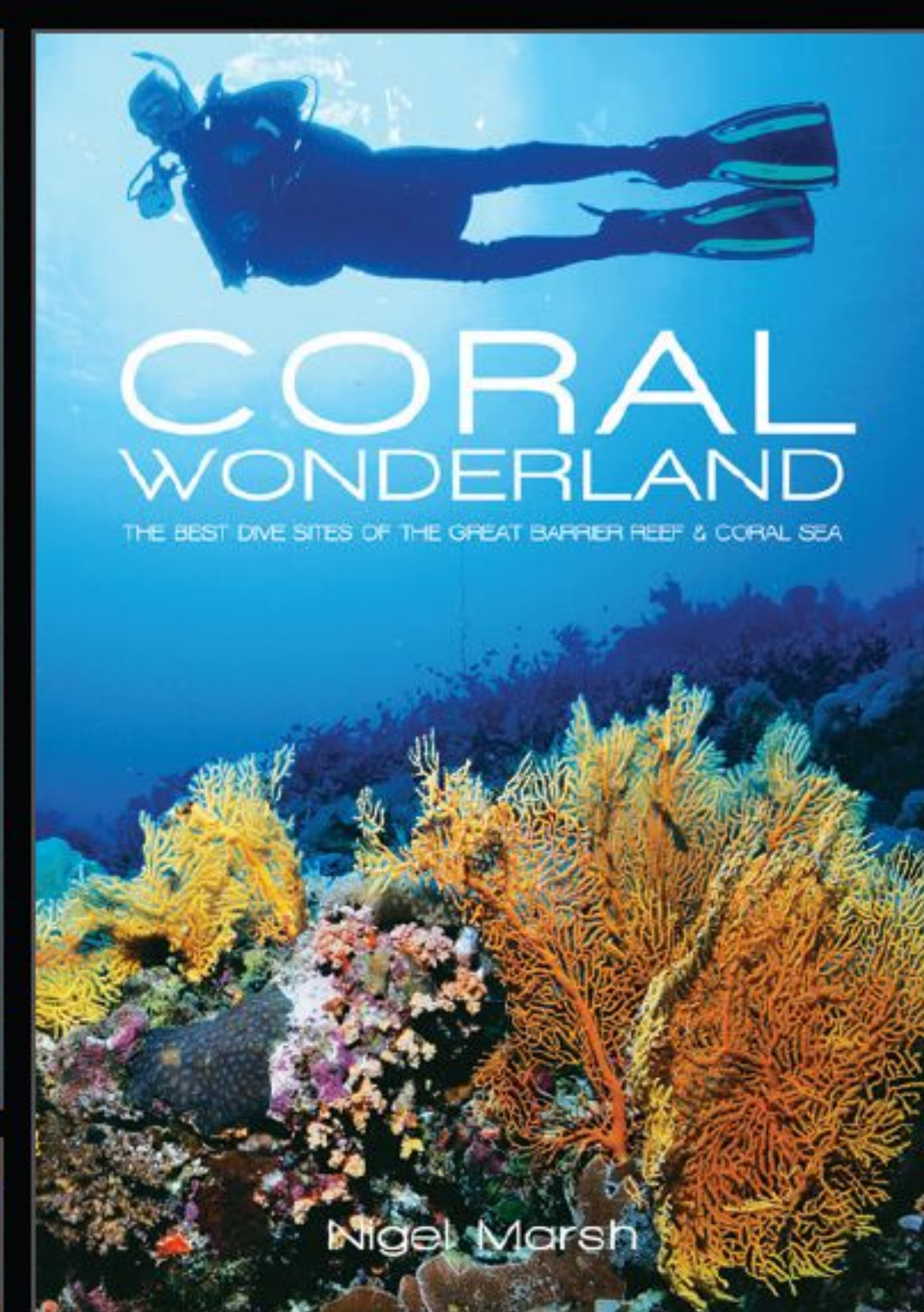
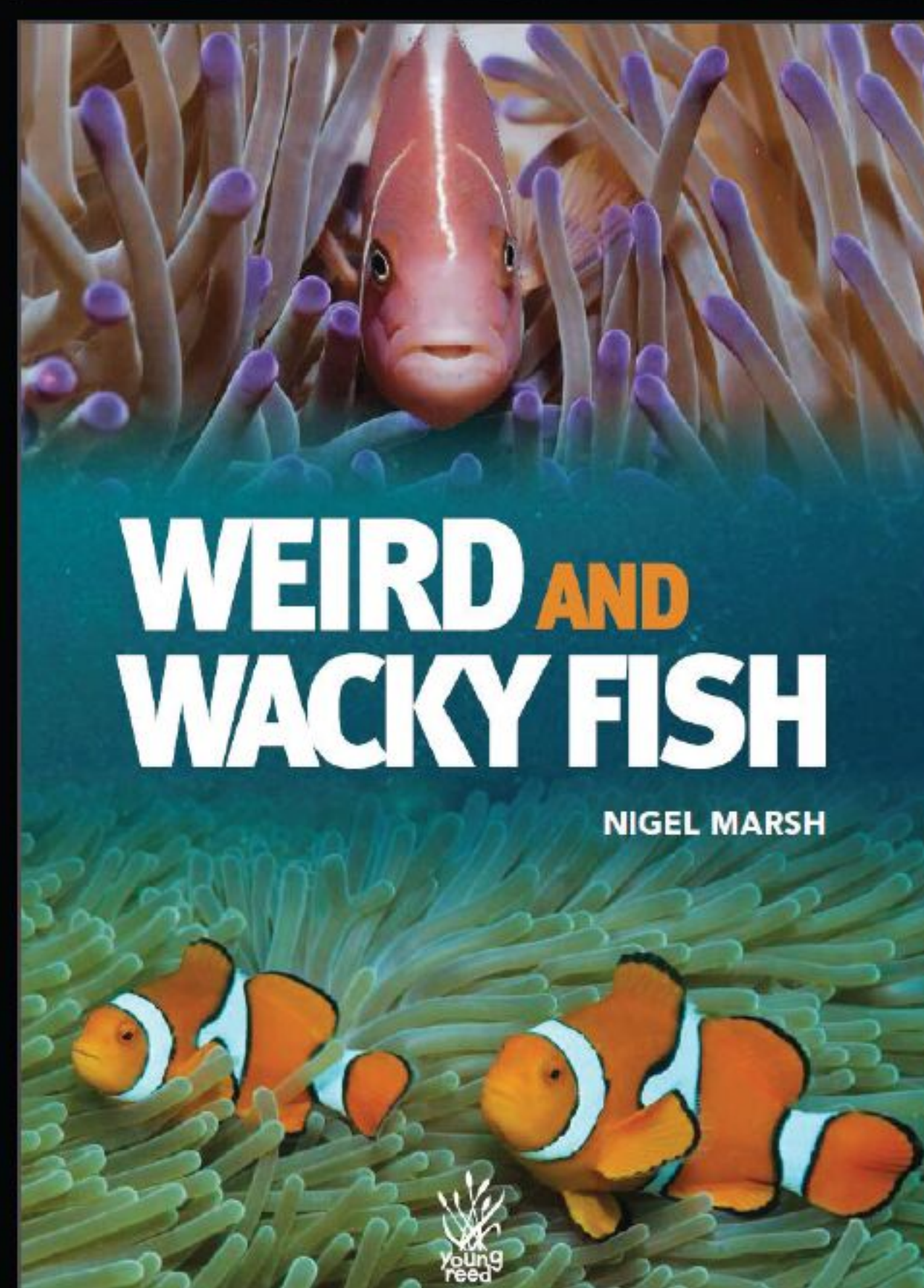
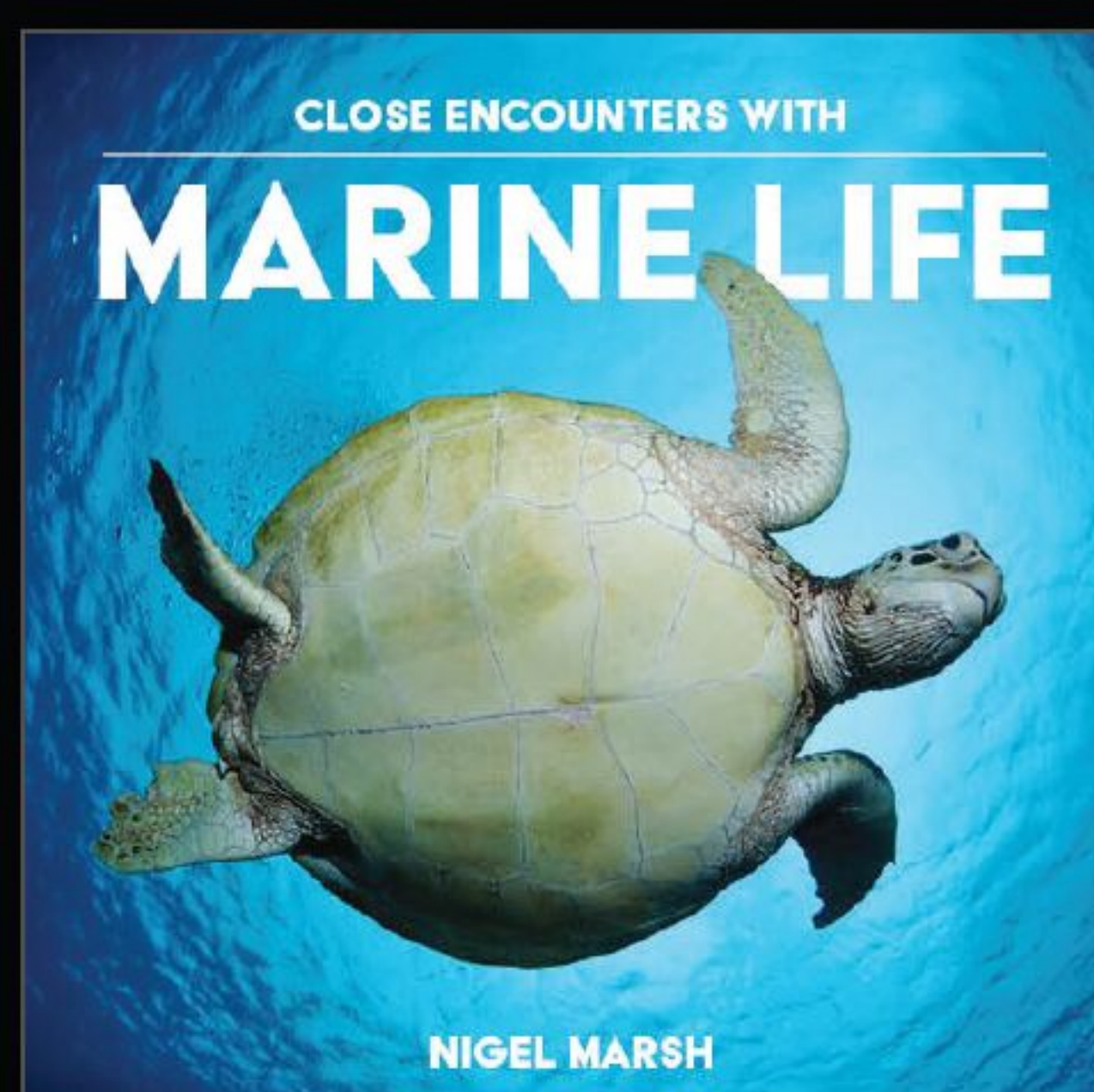
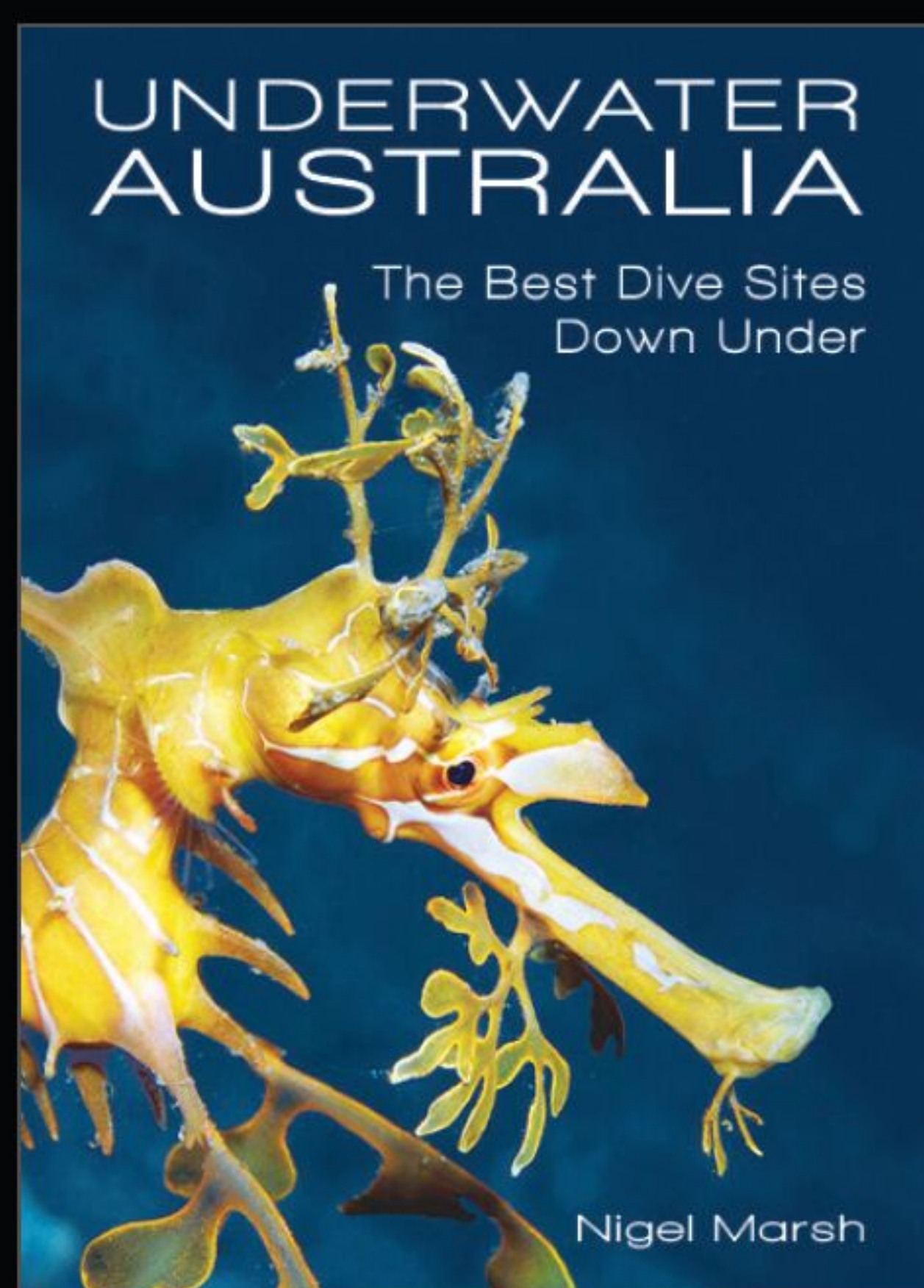
Photo credit: Roving Media




NIGEL MARSH *Photography*

Nigel Marsh is an Australian photojournalist, underwater photographer and author. Working with New Holland publishers, Nigel has produced a number of guide books for divers and snorkelers, and also a series of children's books with marine related themes.

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“ OWUSS was founded 50 years ago by a bunch of young avid scuba divers from North America who wanted an adventure of a lifetime. It's grown into a non-for-profit organisation aimed at fostering the next generation of leaders across the globe by providing them with resources to excel in their diving-based careers ”

A life CHANGI EXPERIENCE

My name is Pablo and I am early career ocean professional who was born in Chile, grew up in New Zealand and have been living in Australia for around 17 years.

Earlier this year, I received some news that changed my life, altered the trajectory of my career and catapulted me into the future by a few years in skills and experience. I am lucky enough to be the 2024 Australasian Scholar for the Our World-Underwater Scholarship Society (OWUSS).

You may not have heard of the Society, I hadn't until about a year before applying. OWUSS was founded 50 years ago by a bunch of young avid scuba divers from North

America who wanted an adventure of a lifetime. It's grown into a non-for-profit organisation aimed at fostering the next generation of leaders across the globe by providing them with resources to excel in their diving-based careers. It's sponsored by some of the biggest brands in the industry and is created by a network of people who love the ocean and empower those who wish to explore and save it.

I found the Scholarship by surfing Twitter. My jaw dropped, I laughed, and thought to myself "that's an insane opportunity but, it'll never happen, move on". A few months later I was chatting to a supervisor who encouraged me to apply to more opportunities, she saw I was underselling



NG NCE

myself. So, I did. When I found out I was selected, I had to hold in a loud scream until I left the public library I was in and call my family to tell them they wouldn't be seeing me too much in the coming 12 months. Since then, the opportunities it's presented me with have exceeded my wildest expectations.

I finished my honours degree in marine ecology a week before I received the news, which was perfect timing to take a break from the six years of continuously being a broke student living at home and think about how I would use this Scholarship to its full potential of making me a better scientist when the year ends. I didn't and still

don't know what I want my future to be, so I decided to use this opportunity to help me find it. My three areas I chose to explore were: become a better diver, become a better science communicator and increase my skills and knowledge in marine ecology.

One of my biggest weaknesses as a student is having little field experience, especially on boats.

So, my first move of the year? Get on a boat for a month to learn about boats and dive with white sharks. I headed to Port Lincoln, to Rodney Fox Shark Expeditions.

The first trip onboard was a scientific expedition led Professor Charlie Huveeners, Australia's leading white shark scientist. Prof Huveeners has been tagging sharks in this region for the last 20 years. His goal for this trip was to get more acoustic and satellite tags on sharks, as well as trial some electromagnetic repellents. Tagging animals provides us with information on where they move, how quickly they move, what behaviour they're exhibiting and possibly connect this with what they're eating. Some tags ping to high-tech microphones underwater, some to satellites when animals swim near the surface, some have cameras that require a poor soul to head out to sea to retrieve the tag, which is easier said than done.

After the science concluded, we resumed the normal operation of cage diving for tourism. Seeing a white shark up close is absolutely mesmerising, it throws out every conceived idea the media portrays them as and shows you the reality. They're very shy, extremely docile around ►

Pablo Fuenzalida extols the virtues of being the 2024 Our World-Underwater Scholar, and recounts some of his experiences so far

Photographs by Pablo Fuenzalida

humans and very food driven. During this time, I also begun working towards obtaining my coxswain grade 1 near coastal. This maritime ticket allows you to skipper vessels up to 12 metres in nearshore waters, which is a highly advantageous trait if I am to become a marine scientist. It's a very long journey to obtain if you've never spent lots of time onboard boats. RFSE was a wonderful and welcoming place allowing me to begin my journey towards this goal, and I'm thankful for their support.

One of the strongest aspects the Scholarship has is its network of supporters, one of them being award-winning photographer Scott Portelli. He runs a wildlife tourism company that merges a few interests I'm passionate about: citizen science, wildlife tourism and science communication. After chatting to him, the next month I was on a plane the Kingdom of Tonga. I flew into Vava'u, an archipelago a few thousand kilometres east of Australia and below Hawaii deep in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

It's often said that swimming with such a large, beautiful, and intelligent animal is a life-changing experience, and it truly is. Whales possess some of the most-empathetic brains in the animal kingdom, with highly developed frontal lobes and spindle cells that are the biological building blocks to support their remarkable intelligence, clearly reflected in their behaviour.

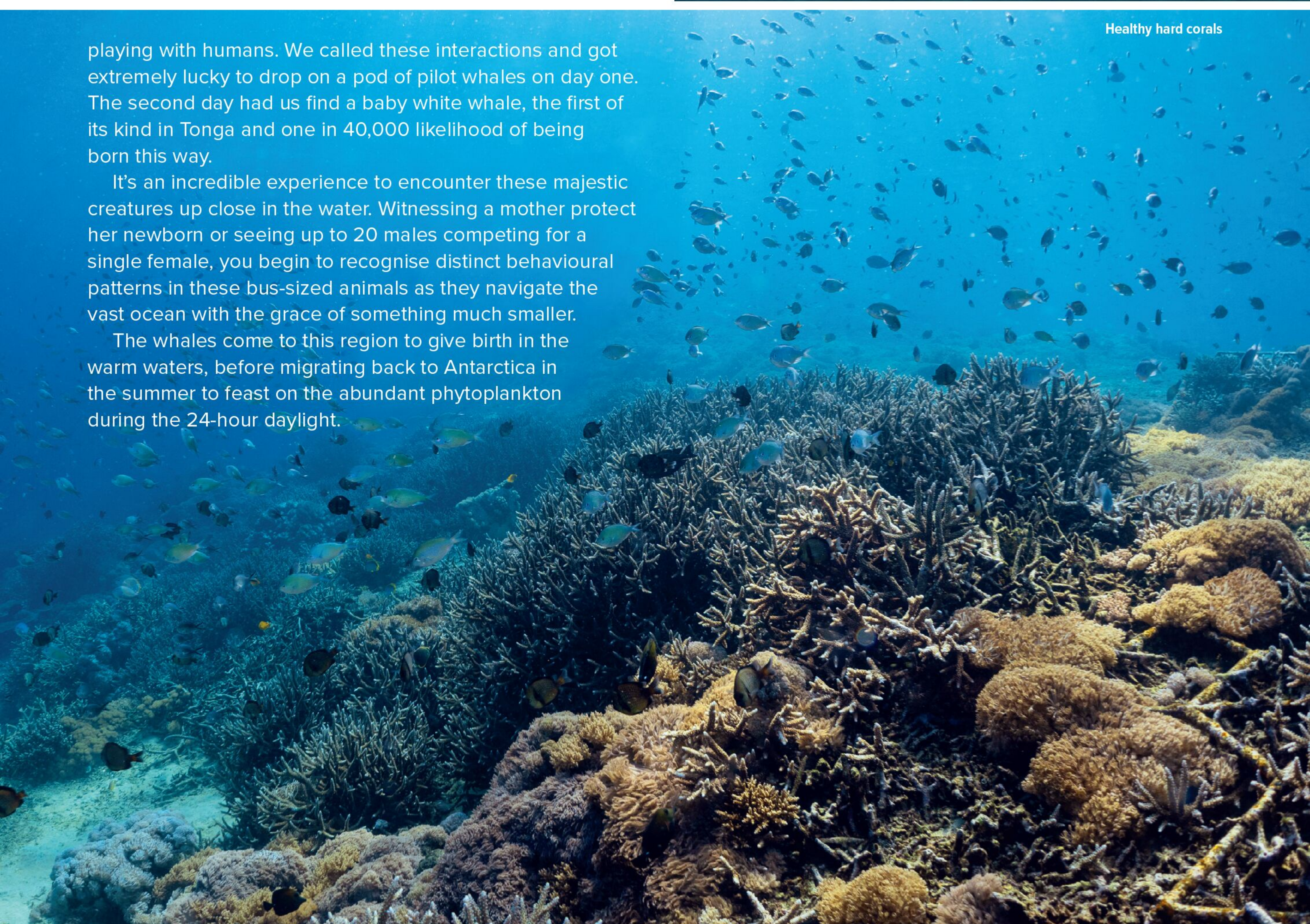
We spent seven hours on the water each day from around 7am to 3pm to search for whales who wanted to spend time



playing with humans. We called these interactions and got extremely lucky to drop on a pod of pilot whales on day one. The second day had us find a baby white whale, the first of its kind in Tonga and one in 40,000 likelihood of being born this way.

It's an incredible experience to encounter these majestic creatures up close in the water. Witnessing a mother protect her newborn or seeing up to 20 males competing for a single female, you begin to recognise distinct behavioural patterns in these bus-sized animals as they navigate the vast ocean with the grace of something much smaller.

The whales come to this region to give birth in the warm waters, before migrating back to Antarctica in the summer to feast on the abundant phytoplankton during the 24-hour daylight.

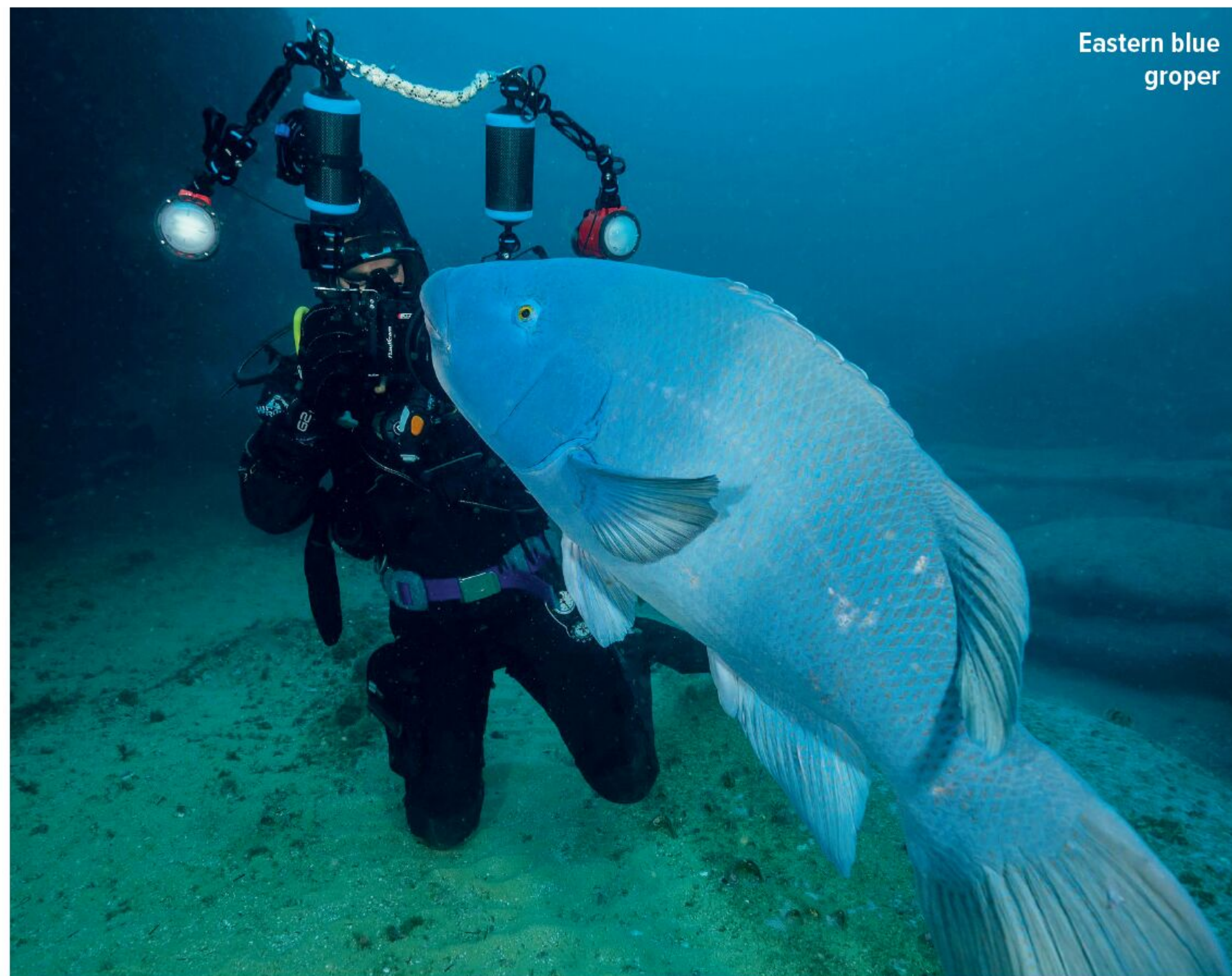


Healthy hard corals



Did you know?

The great white shark is notable for its size, with the largest preserved female specimen measuring 5.83metres in length and around 2,000kg in weight at maturity.



Eastern blue groper



Pyjama nudibranch



Humpback whale and calf

I spent the two weeks there shadowing some world-class photographers who were visiting for the same reason, and learnt an immense amount of knowledge about how powerful photography can be – if you tell the story that’s behind the photo in a meaningful way. It pushed me out of my comfort zone as a scientist. It encouraged me to be creative and to discover my own narrative in a given context. This was a change from working through a narrow question or two on a highly specialised topic that might take two years to answer - and is probably already known by a few old fishermen.

My most-recent adventure took me to Asia for the first time in my life to conduct my PADI Divemaster training. If I was going to be diving daily for around a month, I wanted to be in a relaxed tropical location embedded in the Coral Triangle. This led me to Nusa Lembongan, just east of Bali in Indonesia. I was recommended an eco-dive centre there that’s co-owned by a marine-biologist, Blue Corner Dive Centre.

The PADI Career Development Centre is situated on the beach and seems to never be quiet, no matter the day. From mantas and mola molas to nudibranchs, turtles, and reef fish as far as the visibility allows you to see. Coral cover is 100% in healthy sites, and various non-for-profits engage in the restoration of other sites affected by human-induced impacts such as anchor dragging, extreme overfishing, coral bleaching and chemical pollution driving acidification.

My first dives were a whirlwind of mastering strong drift diving along sloping reefs, dodging bommies, and navigating currents that created small upwellings, downwellings, and micro eddies. Our instructor provided a safe and supportive environment, going above and beyond PADI standards to make sure we were confident and ▶

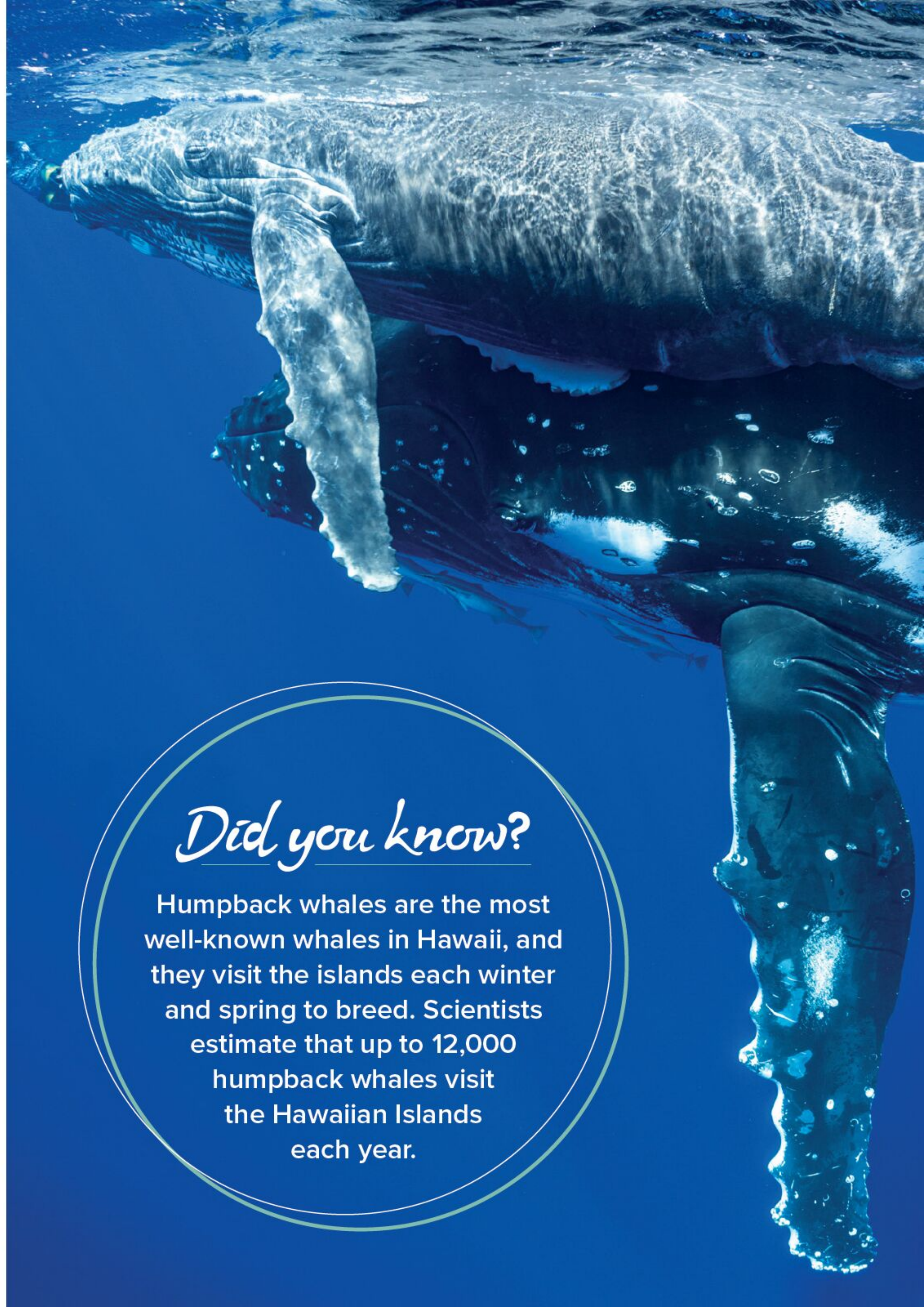
“ I still wake up in disbelief it’s real, smile until it hurts and gaze into the ocean everyday knowing I’m one of the luckiest people I know ”



Pablo Fuenzalida



Sharpnose pufferfish



Did you know?

Humpback whales are the most well-known whales in Hawaii, and they visit the islands each winter and spring to breed. Scientists estimate that up to 12,000 humpback whales visit the Hawaiian Islands each year.

conservative divers, which I absolutely loved. I'm addicted to learning, and it felt magical to be doing it underwater in a practical setting, rather than coding and suffering indefinitely in an office like I had been during the past year while working on my honour's thesis.

The dive centre hosted so many initiatives that made me extremely happy with my decision in choosing them as trainers. From providing healthcare to all staff, hiring mostly Indonesians to manage both the centre and dive instructors, to creating their own scholarship that empowers local Indonesian women who want to pursue a career in diving with Advanced, Rescue, Divemaster and restoration courses. I was lucky enough to meet one of the owners who told me the idea of creating the dive centre was always to fund the restoration activities, and they have an impressive track record in doing exactly this.

They began deploying coral frames and transplanting corals to re-grow reefs on rubble deserts in northern Penida in 2018 and have deployed hundreds of them now. They host marine ecology, coral and megafauna courses, as well as train people in Reef Check and CoralWatch

monitoring methodologies which are citizen science programmes designed for any diver to learn. It's a mecca for divers wanting to take their hobby to the next level and engage in direct ways we can protect and restore the beauty being lost in our oceans currently.

I'm extremely grateful for the support each host has shown me so far in the few months I've had this Scholarship. I still wake up in disbelief it's real, smile until it hurts and gaze into the ocean everyday knowing I'm one of the luckiest people I know. I'm also overly conscious to not be wasting one of the greatest opportunities of my life and push myself to my limits to ensure not a day is wasted while I have this opportunity. I still give myself downtime, I would crash and burn if I didn't. However, you tire more slowly when your 'job' is your dream, your passion and your destined future.

My hopes for the remainder of the Scholarship are to obtain my commercial diving ticket, learn new coding techniques to track

marine megafauna movement and dive in various new environments to continue exploring the beauty that's hidden in our underwater world while training me for the future. ■

“
My three areas I chose to explore were: become a better diver, become a better science communicator and increase my skills and knowledge in marine ecology
”

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www.youtube.com/ScubaDiverMagazine

DYNAMICNORD RF-40 | SRP: ANZ\$TBA



With the sporty RF-40 open-heel fin by DynamicNord, you enjoy maximum effectiveness and fun. The innovative design guarantees ease and power - exactly what every diver wants. Designed and engineered in Germany, and made in Europe, the powerful blade of the RF-40 fin and its dynamic design with innovative water channels allow divers to perform both technical and recreational kicks with maximum propulsion.

The power is efficiently transmitted from the foot pocket and sole to the blade for outstanding kick stability and

manoeuvrability. The foot pocket of the open-heel fin is comfortable, and the smart bungee strap enables to make small length adjustments without using any tools. This way, the fin can be used with neoprene boots or with a drysuit.

The heel pad has a large finger loop that is easy to grasp even when wearing gloves, making donning and doffing the fin a breeze. The RF-40 fins are available from DynamicNord dealers in six colourways - blue, grey, orange, purple, red, and yellow, in sizes from Medium to X-Large.

www.dynamicnord.com

SUEX VR SERIES | NEMO SRP: ANZ\$TBC, VOYAGER SRP: ANZ\$TBC AND QUANTUM SRP: ANZ\$TBC

Introducing the brand-new VR Series by Suex. These scooters bring the latest tech, innovative design, and top-notch user experience to the forefront for pros, hobbyists, and travellers alike.

The VR Series shines with its Nautilus Concept, delivering superb stability and maneuverability even in tough conditions like strong currents or tight spaces. Enhanced hydrodynamics make them energy-efficient, so you get more battery life.

These scooters offer incredible flexibility. Swap batteries and noses to easily switch between the entry-level Nemo, air-travel-friendly Voyager, or the high-performance Quantum. Plus, you can choose from various colours to match your style. With the Calypso app, tweak settings, map motors for Eco or Sport mode, and monitor your scooter in real time. Dive safely and enjoyably with a scooter that's built for everyone.

www.suex.it



GARMIN DESCENT G2 | SRP: ANZ\$2,149

The Descent G2 is a rugged watch-style dive computer with features to help divers explore both their underwater and topside worlds. With support for multiple dive modes – ranging from technical diving to freediving – plus popular features like a dive readiness score and Garmin’s suite of health, fitness and connected features, the newest dive computer is ready for the next adventure.

It also features an eco-friendly design with parts made with recycled ocean-bound plastics and up to ten days of battery life in smartwatch mode to keep the explorations going.

“Whether you’re a novice diver or more seasoned, the Descent G2 is designed to grow with you – even into tech diving. And with popular features for life above the water like dive readiness, 24/7 heart rate, advanced sleep monitoring and more, there is no limit as to what this watch can do before, during and after your next dive,” said Dan Bartel, Garmin Vice President of Global Consumer Sales.

Featuring a 1.2” AMOLED display, the Descent G2 makes it easier to read more data at a glance, even while underwater, and this is complemented by a strong sapphire lens, 100m dive-rated case and leakproof buttons.

The Descent G2 is also available in two colourways – a popular black and a colourful paloma/shell pink – and is compatible with QuickFit bands so divers can easily change their band colour to match the style of their gear.



The G2 has multiple dive modes, including single and multi-gas (including nitrox and trimix), closed-circuit rebreather (CCR) and gauge, plus an in-dive three-axis compass, and freediving features like dynamic apnea mode.

Once back on dry land, the dive log lets users review their data, track gear, take notes and share details via the Garmin Dive app. Surface GPS can also help users track their entry and exit points and view them on a map. For life above the water, the Descent G2 includes Garmin’s suite of health and wellness, training and connected features.

www.garmin.com

SEALIFE SEA DRAGON DUO 6000 COLOUR BOOST UNDERWATER PHOTO/VIDEO LIGHT SET | SRP: US\$999.95

SeaLife has introduced their new Sea Dragon 6000 Colour Boost Photo-Video light set based on two Sea Dragon 3000F Colour Boost Underwater Photo/Video lights on the new Ultra Dual Tray.

The Sea Dragon 3000F Colour Boost photo-video lights deliver 3,000 lumens in an even 120° wide beam. Side by side they offer more complete coverage of a subject.

The 3000F Colour Boost lights offer an impressive 90 CRI (colour rendering index) with their proprietary COB LED array that closely simulates natural sunlight (A CRI of 100 would be just like outdoor daylight). Most other LED lights offer a much lower CRI, missing critical colours necessary produce natural and colourful still images and videos. The Sea Dragon 3000F Colour Boost, with their unique COB LED, not only offer a high CRI, it also allow as a colour temperature adjustment from an already favourable 5,000K (Kelvin) to an even warmer, more colourful 3900K. The effect is noticeable to the eye and in the images and video.

The Sea Dragon 6000 Duo Colour Boost light set offers impressive still image results and can be used as a primary source of light.

The Sea Dragon Duo 6000 Colour Boost Set’s brightness can be adjusted easily with a intensity dial on top of the light from 300 lumens to over 3,000. Push the dial, and the light switches from the 5,000K colour temperature to 3,900K.

The set includes two Sea Dragon 3000F Colour Boost light heads connected to two Flex-Connect grips on the new Flex-Connect Ultra dual tray. The new Ultra tray holds bigger, wider cameras and housings, including SeaLife’s new SportDiver Ultra Smartphone Housing. The lights can be directed more precisely at subjects by adding SeaLife’s Flex-Connect flex arms (optional item).

Part of the pair of Sea Dragon Duo 6000 Colour Boost’s impressive performance is their powerful 25W Li-ion rechargeable battery packs, that run the lights for 60 minutes at full power. The light set also include two battery chargers, along with US and three each international plug adapters, an action camera mount, and a large protective travel case (SL944 Duo case) that holds the entire system including a camera.

www.SeaLife-Cameras.com.au





GEAR TEST EXTRA

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SCUBAPRO LUNA 2.0 AI | SRP: ANZ\$665

Mark Evans: When the original Galileo series came out, Scubapro had a hit on their hands. The Luna – and the range-topping Sol – were fantastic bits of kit, with very large, clear displays, easy-to-navigate menus, and an array of buttons that could be operated with no issues even when wearing thicker neoprene gloves (not something that should be overlooked if you are predominantly a cold-water diver).

Now the Luna is back in 2.0 guise, and while it is far more slimline than its predecessor, which makes it very neat on your arm, it still has a large display that is easy to understand. Yes, it is black and white matrix LCD, when everyone seems to be going full-colour these days (though Scubapro have got you covered on that front – just opt for a G2), but even in low-vis conditions, it was still clear to see, and the LED backlight really makes the digits ‘pop’.

Rather than three buttons along the top, the Luna 2.0 has two long, thin buttons situated on either side, and this makes them simple to locate and press with your thumb and/or forefinger to enter and navigate around the menus. It is perhaps not quite so straightforward right off the bat as the old unit – where it actually stated right there on the screen what each button did – but as everything is either a short press for scrolling and a long press for confirming/going back a stage, you will soon be bouncing around each section like a pro.

Scubapro state that the Luna is designed for ‘new and casual recreational divers’, but it is depth-rated to 120m and has the capability to handle up to three nitrox mixes (21-50 percent) – as well as having a gauge mode – so this could quite easily cater for an entry-level technical diver too.

It has two tried-and-tested algorithms – Predictive Multi-Gas Bühlmann ZH-L16 ADT MB PMG or ZH-L16 + GF PURE



– and three dive modes, the aforementioned gauge mode, alongside scuba, and apnea for the freedivers out there.

When paired with a Smart + Pro transmitter (our test unit came with the transmitter as a ready-to-go set, but you can also get the computer on its own and buy the transmitter down the line), the Luna 2.0 AI enables you to easily monitor your tank pressure at a glance, as well as providing true remaining bottom time (RBT), and air consumption is factored into the decompression calculation.

The Smart + Pro transmitter is quite compact, and features a nifty LED display – a blinking green light is shown for 100bar and over (i.e. half a tank), a blinking yellow light signifies gas pressure is between 50-100bar, and a blinking red light shows when the pressure drops

below 50bar. This makes for a nice, clear indicator of your gas levels for your buddy. Also available with the Luna 2.0 AI is an optional integrated heart rate monitor that tracks your heart rate and skin temperature to help stay in the personal target zone.

Like the original Luna, the 2.0 edition has a very long strap, so you can easily and securely mount it on your forearm even over a thick drysuit, and it also has mounting points for bungees if you want to go that route, but I prefer the thick silicone strap. I also like the bright blue colourway – it certainly stands out underwater, especially as most drysuits are black or darker colours.

There is also the Luna 2.0 available, which is basically the same computer (the protective cover is black rather than blue), it just foregoes the air-integration capability, and thus it is a cheaper option for those on more of a budget, although to be fair, the price of the AI version is very competitive.

Both Luna 2.0 models include personalized dive management functions like PDIS (Profile Dependent Intermediate Stops) which calculates an intermediate stop based on N2 loading, current and previous dives and



breathing mixes, and Microbubble levels that give the option to adjust the level of conservatism in the algorithm to match the individual experience level, age and physical conditioning for a more-enjoyable dive.

A Bluetooth Low Energy interface enables the download of the dive data to any iOS or Android device or PC/Mac (firmware can be user-updated), and the CR2450 battery is rated for up to two years or 300 dives. When this finally runs out, it is a simple matter to remove the protective cover and replace the battery yourself.

The Luna 2.0 comes in a zipped and padded protective box, keeping it safe during transport and storage.

We were impressed by the Luna 2.0. The screen might be smaller than the original, but we found it was still easy to see and understand as the display is brighter. The menus are simple to navigate, and the two buttons can be found and operated wearing drygloves or thick neoprene gloves. The low-profile body sits nice and flat on your forearm, so is less of a snag hazard. It is quite competitively priced against the competition, and as we said, it has the capabilities of growing with you as a diver to a decent level.

www.scubapro.com



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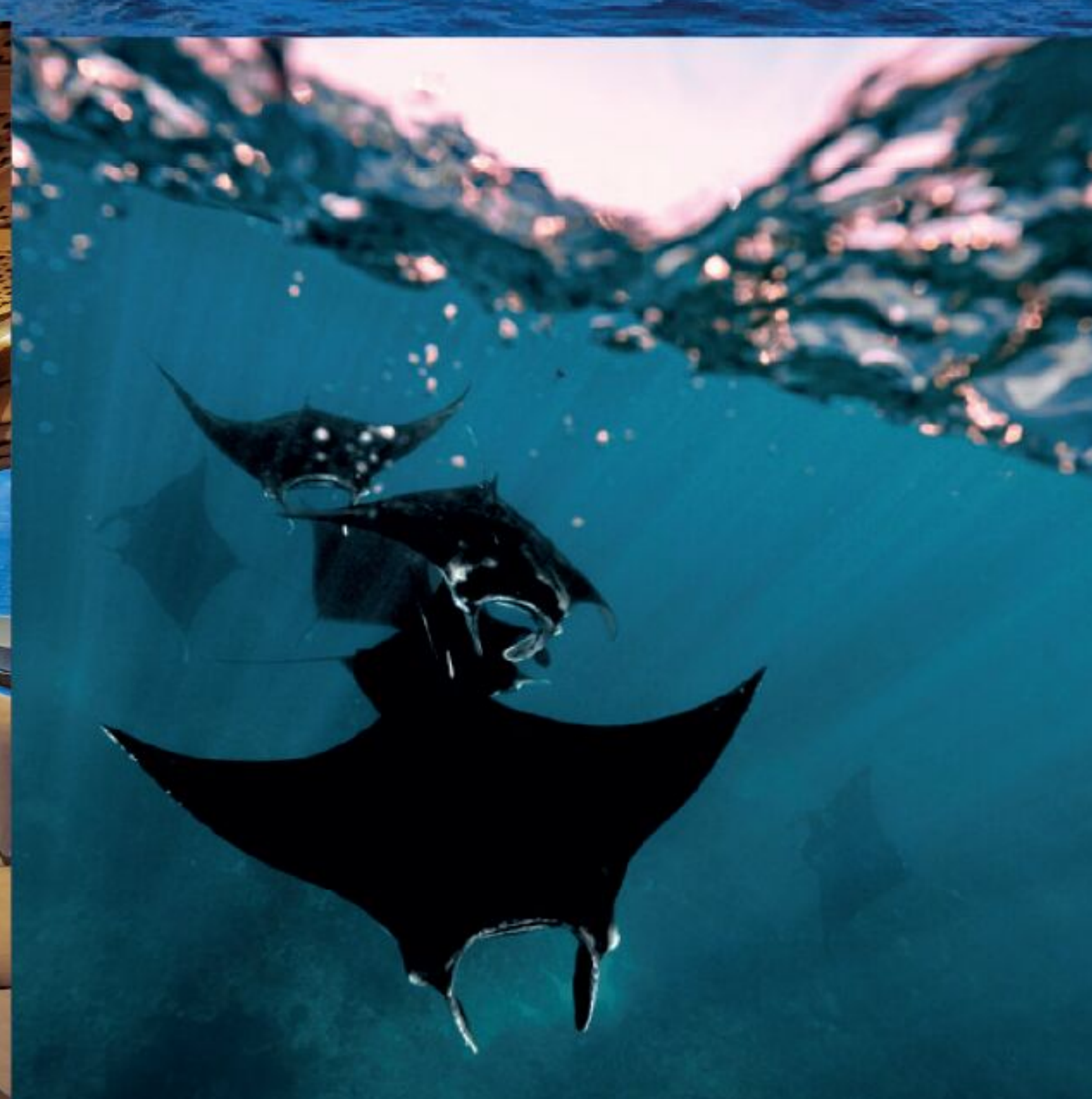
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